

# SOLA GRATIA

Pastor Lucas Almeida—Centra Baptist Church—October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## TEXT

Titus 2:11-14

ESV

[11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] 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.

## INTRODUCTION

What is at the heart of human motivation? What drives us to do what we do in life? Positively, we are often driven by success, the greater good, common goals. Negatively, we are driven by pride, selfishness, hatred.

Darwinists would say that we are driven by a survival instinct. Freud would say that a sex drive is behind our every motivation.

But friends, in reality there are only two motivating factors in our lives. Either we are motivated by sin, the original sin we've inherited from Adam (and this is the reality of everyone who has no faith in Christ); or we are motivated by grace—the grace of God.

During the month of October, we are taking some time to remember the Protestant Reformation. This great movement that began in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century as a desire to bring the Catholic Church to a place of faithfulness was born in the hearts of faithful men.

As we saw last week, one of the most central words that came out of the Reformation was the word *soia*. *Sola* means only, alone. The Catholic Church was happy to affirm the authority of Scripture, the necessity of grace, the importance of faith, the centrality of Christ, and the glory of God. But the reformers fought and died to add to these the word alone!

The Five Solas of the Reformation are the five pillar doctrines the Reformers affirmed. And along with them, we too affirm them.

- Sola Scriptura = Scripture Alone
- Sola Gratia = Grace Alone
- Sola Fide = Faith Alone
- Solus Christus = Christ Alone
- Soli Deo Gloria = To the Glory of God Alone

As protestants we affirm that “Scripture alone teaches us that, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone we are saved; and all this amounts to the glory of God alone.”

As we turn this week from Scripture Alone to Grace Alone, we are reminded that for centuries the Catholic Church had taught that sin run deeply in the heart of men, but not that deeply. If men would just do a few works, a few religious acts, acts like baptism and other sacraments, men would be free from their sinful depravity and be able to turn to God.

Listen to what the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** says even today: “[Original sin] is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted...Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ’s grace, erases original sin and turns a man back towards God...”

Now, this is not what the Bible teaches, is it? Ephesians 2 is so clear; we are born dead in our trespasses and our sins. But God makes us alive in Christ—by grace we have been saved. Grace is what God gives sinners in order to transfer us spiritually from death to life.

Grace, friends, is not something we add to our efforts. God’s grace is shockingly undeserving, grace is overwhelmingly unexpected. The grace of God reaches us when we are deeply drenched in our depravity, and it sustains us in spite of our own tendencies to drift and rebel against God. It is God’s grace alone that saves us. It is God’s grace alone that quickens our hearts dead in trespasses and sins. It is God’s grace alone that motivates us to grow in Christ. It is God’s grace alone that will lead us back to God in the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the reformers called, “SOLA GRATIA”—grace alone.

As we turn to our text today, I want you to especially notice the all-encompassing power of grace. Grace saves us, but it trains us, and it also gives us hope for the future. Christianity is not well defined by the jargon, “Do your best and let God do the rest.” The grace of God initiates our saving faith, and it also motivates our good works. Grace nullifies all our pride and gives glory to Christ, who it the “author and perfecter of our faith. Sola Gratia proclaims that everything and anything that is good and redeemable within us is a result of the grace God imparts.

So, let us turn to our text today and consider Grace’s role in salvation.

## **SALVATION**

*“For the grace of God has appeared...”*. Notice that grace is a personification here—it appears. And what causes it to appear? Nothing, it simply does as a free gift to us. Really, grace came to us in the first appearing/coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in their redemptive plan, brought salvation to us.

**John 1:17**—*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

God's grace has been present among humans from the very beginning, but there was something particularly special about grace that was revealed to all people when Jesus came to earth—Salvation. "...the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation..."

Grace brings salvation. Salvation from what? From God himself. From his righteous wrath that should be poured on all of us. I wonder if you realize that. God saves us from God. God saves us from himself.

Friends, our greatest problem is not Satan, it's not the world. Our greatest problem is that God in his justice stands against all ungodliness as a warrior wielding his flaming sword—and we are the ungodly.

But listen to these words of hope:

**Romans 5:6**—*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Friends, this is salvation accomplished! The death of Christ, the sinless God-man, for those who should have died for their sins. This is at the heart of grace alone—Sola Gratia. The grace of God in the death of Christ.

God judges in his righteousness, but God also saves in his grace. And who is the object of his grace? All people. Literally, all humanity. Salvation has been made available to everyone without distinction. Anyone who draws near to God in faith and repentance will be saved.

**James 4:8**—*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

**John 6:37**—*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*

Friend, I wonder if you are feeling the weight of your sin. I wonder if today you sense that God is not for you, but against you. Grace alone cries out to you, come to Christ and receive his salvation. I wonder if you sense that your ungodliness is beyond redemption.

In the words of Puritan pastor, **Richard Sibbs**, "There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us." Grace is an invitation to the vilest sinner to be forgiven. God doesn't forgive those who sin less than others, God forgive those who trust in his sinless Son. God forgives those who trust in him for his grace alone.

## TRAINING

God doesn't work only in the beginning of our salvation; he is actively involved with our salvation from beginning to end. He begun a good work in us, and he will bring it to completion. We do not become spiritual orphans once we become saved. We are saved by faith, and we pursue our sanctification by walking in faith.

*It is interesting that the word for training here, Paideuouosa means instructing as one instructs a child. This is exactly what is happening spiritually. We are saved by grace, we become children of God. And by grace, God then instructs us on how to live as children of God. God's adoption of us is complete. It comes with redemption and instruction.*

Just yesterday I was teaching my son to fly a kite. I can't honestly tell you who was having more fun with that... I can tell you that at a point he went back inside the house, and I stayed outside with the kite. But we both enjoyed it...I think.

There was so much there for him to learn. Direction of the wind, keeping tension on the string, avoiding trees. Alone, he would have never put that kite in the air, but as I worked with him, he began to learn. And that's how God works with us, he gets involved with our fights, struggles, with our growth.

One of the most important steps towards maturity is when a Christian understands that the gospel is not just for salvation, but for the whole of the Christian life.

- **Galatians 2:20**—*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
- **Philippians 2:12–13**—*...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
- **Colossians 1:29**—*For this I toil, struggling with all HIS energy that HE powerfully works within me.*
- **Hebrews 12:1–2**—*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...*

Grace instructs us, but how does grace instruct us? Just like we saw last week with Scripture, which has a positive and a negative aspect for its profitability; grace instructs us both correctively and instructionally unto Christ likeness.

**Correction**—Renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions. In other words, God's grace reveals to us those aspects of our lives that do not reflect the character of the God—that's ungodliness—and also those aspects of our lives that reflect the world—worldly passions.

Colossians 3:5-8 actually gives us a list of examples of ungodliness and worldly passions. It's very helpful for us to consider these as practices that Christians MUST put to death: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry...anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Can I encourage you to do something? Can I encourage you to take this list home tonight, and circle the practices in this list that you must put to death? And I want to ask you to commit these areas to prayer. And if you are especially entrapped in one of these areas, can I encourage you to call your deacon or a mature Christian brother or sister in this church and say, "Please help me."

Friends, the grace of God thrives in an environment of honesty, vulnerability, where we are constantly confessing our sin and allowing light to shine into darkness.

**Instruction**—embracing self-control, uprightness, godly living. Grace trains us to live lives that reflect Christ, and it does so today! In this present age! Grace does not leave for tomorrow what must be accomplished today.

We often think of grace as a soft prompting of God, that gently waits for our initiative in order to work. Friend, let the word of God shatter this misconception from your mind. God will put you through the ringer if he finds it necessary in order to cause you to grow into Christ likeness—and this is called grace. God will strip you of every confidence in self and will only leave you room for confidence in him in order to instruct you in grace.

**2 Timothy 2:1**—*You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus...*

Friends, grace is powerful. It gives strength, and it often does so through hardship. And if you are a Christian, you have to know that you have signed your rights over to God, and he will work out his grace in your life over your comfort, he will work out his grace in your life over your dreams, he will work out his grace in your life even over your desires; but it is necessary that we should experience the grace of God, because the evidence that we have experienced the salvation that grace bring is in the fact that in this present age we are experiencing the training that grace gives.

When I think of grace, I'm often reminded of Joseph's story in Genesis 37-50. Joseph grew up in a household filled with favoritism and contentiousness. He is sold into slavery by his own brothers, falsely accused of sexual abuse, put in prison, forgotten in prison for fifteen years.

Genesis 39 is the peak of Joseph's suffering. But as I read that chapter, I'm not surprised with the injustices he suffered. No, suffering injustice is common to men. Do you know what shocks me in that chapter? Throughout Joseph's suffering and oppression we are told five times that the Lord was with him, and we are told three times that the Lord was blessing him. Friends, this is the grace of God!

God is orchestrating our lives so that we can say with Joseph, “What you meant for evil, God meant for good!” God is not interested in your present comfort; no, he is interested that his grace accomplishes his purposes in your life! God’s training is often grueling, demanding, exhausting; but the outcome is glorious! The outcome of God’s training grace in our lives is eternal life with him.

## HOPE

Hope is a great Christian virtue. Faith, love, and hope create a trifold of virtues that must characterize the Christian life. Notice in our text that Christians hope for a blessing that is yet to come—the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in between two appearances; did you notice that in the text? There is only two appearances—Jesus came, Jesus is coming. Christ appeared once and grace came with him; Christ will appear again, and grace will carry us there.

One of the most powerful aspects of grace is that it causes us to look forward to a time when all the promises we have been given will be fulfilled. Friends, we can’t live well in a world of suffering if Christ’s return is not on the forefront of our minds!

**1 Peter 1:13**—...*set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

This is a call to wait! We often associate waiting with idleness, but this is not the Christian call to wait! We wait in the powerful grace of God! As we wait for Christ in his grace, we actively wait as we become more like Christ through his grace. Our greatest motivation to live for Christ today is the hope and certainty that Christ is coming for us tomorrow.

But pastor Lucas, how can you be so sure of the future promises God has made? How can you be sure that they will come to fruition? How can you know that your future is assured with God? Friends, God’s future promises for his people are all rooted in the finished, complete, all-encompassing work of Christ on the cross.

Look at our last verse for today: ...*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.*

## [GOSPEL]

The root of both aspects of grace, its saving nature and its training nature rest on the fact that Jesus died for his people—to justify them and to sanctify them. If we have been saved by Christ, we will live holy lives for him—and this is all of grace.

In the Martin Luther Movie 1953 there is an interesting interaction between Luther and another priest that goes like this:

-Dr. Martin, if you leave the Christian to live only by faith. If you sweep away all good works, all these glorious things and dismiss them as mere crutches, what will you put in their place?

-Christ. Men only need Jesus Christ.