

## Sola Gratia: By Grace Alone

### Introduction

*The key doctrine:* “If we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose everything.”

- Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, 1535

*The key question:* Is humanity through the church able or unable to contribute to their justification?

*A key distinction:*

“Grace...is the fountain and source even of faith itself... Grace is the fountain and the stream; faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men.”

- C.H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace*

### I. The helplessness of humanity - Ephesians 2:1-3

#### ***i) Total depravity - Living, following, gratifying, enslaved***

Romans 1:21-23

*“For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

Psalms 51:5

*“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

“Here I only want to suggest briefly that the whole man is overwhelmed - as by a deluge - from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin. As Paul says, all turnings of the thoughts to the flesh are enmities against God (Rom 8:7) and are therefore death (Rom 8:6).”

- John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.6

#### ***ii) Total inability - Dead***

Psalms 14:1-3

*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”*

*They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;  
there is none who does good.*

*The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,*

*to see if there are any who understand,  
who seek after God.  
They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
there is none who does good,  
not even one.*

*Jeremiah 13:23*

*"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."*

*"Free choice without the grace of God is not free at all, but immutably the captive and slave of evil, since it cannot of itself turn to the good."*

*- Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will*

*(see also Gen 3:14-19, 6:5, 11:1-4; Romans 1:18-32, 3:9-19)*

***The Roman Catholic view of humanity (then and now)...***

*"Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it."*

*- Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I.1.viii*

***...leads to the process of justification.***

*"Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."*

*- Council of Trent, 1547*

*"Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom."*

*- Catechism of the Catholic Church, III.1.3.2.i*

*"Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life."*

*- Catechism of the Catholic Church, III.1.3.2.iii*

**Augustinian, and therefore Reformational, position:**

“Give what you command and command what you will.”

- Augustine, *The Confessions*

“Salvation is beyond our own powers and devices, and depends on the work of God alone.”

- Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*

**Application:**

John 6:63a - The flesh is of no use, so stop trusting in it and pandering to it.

John 6:63b - We need an **external** word of salvation to raise us from death

**II. The graciousness of God - Ephesians 2:4-9**

***i) Grace is from God alone, not humanity***

The initiative of God the Father: 1:2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11(x2),13(x2),20(x2),22(x2);  
2:5,6(x2),7,8,10(x3)

Through God the Son: 1:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,11,13,20,22; 2:5,6(x2),7,10

Sealed by the Spirit: 1:14,17

Humanity? *Active in sin (2:1-3), passive in salvation (1:1-14, 2:1-9)*

***ii) Grace is from God through Christ alone, not the Church***

“Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.”

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, II.1.2.iv*

“Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.”  
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, III.1.3.2.i*

Romans 3:23-25

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”*

**Application:** Look to Christ, not yourself nor anywhere else

**III. The activity of the believer now: by grace - Ephesians 2:10**

- i) Glorify God for His glorious grace - 1:6
  
- ii) Life in the Church, the community of grace - 2:11-22, 4:1-6
  
- iii) Hearing the word of grace - 4:11-13
  
- iv) Speaking the word of grace - 4:15, 29