

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> of a 5 part series on the *Protestant Reformation* - as we celebrate and remember the Reformation which began 500 years ago.

There's Bibles in front of you - and you should have a sermon outline - to write notes if you wish...

Before we start - let me pray for God's wisdom, guidance and understanding first

## **Intro**

As we've said in the last few weeks the Protestant Reformation was basically a protest against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church at the time

The protesters were basically saying that the Church's teaching should be based on:

### **[Powerpoint 1-5 Solas]**

Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone

Sola Gratia - Grace Alone

Sola Fide - Faith Alone

Solus Christus - Christ Alone

Soli Deo Gloria - Glory to God Alone

(pause)

## Context/What is Grace?

So far we've looked at Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, and Christ Alone

This week we're looking at Grace Alone

[Powerpoint 2-Sola Gratia]

So what is Grace?

[Powerpoint 3-Defintion]

### Dictionary

*Unmerited/undeserved divine [From God] assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification*

### Theological Definition

*The merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues*

Notice where this grace is coming from?

It's from God...

It's God doing the work - not us

At the time of the Reformation - the Roman Catholic Church at the time - taught that they (the Church) were the ones dispensing grace to the people

The Church did this through the Pope (as the Vicar of Christ), through the Church's teachings and traditions, through confessing sins to Priest who forgave people's sins, through the buying of indulgences (pieces of paper) which got their loved ones out of this limbo place between Earth and Heaven - called purgatory, and by controlling what they taught people from the Bible by only having the Bible in Latin, which ordinary folk didn't know and couldn't read.

So basically the Church was controlling God's grace.

The trouble with all of this - is a) it's not in God's Word, the Bible and b) none of these practices can save people from their sin and rebellion and get them right with God

Because as we've learnt so far in our series on the Reformation

We are saved from our sin and rebellion against God

By Faith Alone in Christ Alone - and it's God's Word - Scripture Alone - that teaches us how we are saved by Faith Alone in Christ Alone

And as we're going to see today

This is only possible by God's Grace Alone - not by us and not by the Church!

So when we talk about being saved by grace alone

We mean our salvation from God's wrath and anger because of our sin and rebellion against Him - and our salvation from going to Hell - is because of the goodness of God - and not because of anything good in us

The Bible's view of human nature is that from the time Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden - human nature has basically been sinful and corrupt

However there's a common misconception in our society and culture that has unlimited confidence in human nature and human goodness - and the thinking that humans are basically good

So a lot of people have trouble accepting the Bible's view of human nature

### **Why we need God's Grace**

So why do we need God's grace?

Let's have a look at a view verses that describe human nature:

[Powerpoint 4-Human Condition]

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure. (Job 14:1-2)

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. (Matthew 15:19)

So the Bible says our hearts are basically corrupt, deceitful, beyond cure - and that we're sinful from birth

Which is why the Apostle Paul concludes in Romans 8:7-8

[Powerpoint 5-Human Condition]

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

So the bottom line is - in our human condition - we cannot submit to and keep God's rules - and we cannot please God  
Therefore we cannot save ourselves

Yet our society and culture teaches us the misconception that we are masters of our own destiny - and because we have so much and can do so much - there is the view that God is not needed - we can do everything ourselves thank you!

From a young age - we are all taught as children - that we have it within ourselves to accomplish anything we want - if we just set our minds on it and give it our best shot

Then as we become Christians we carry that optimism into our thinking about our God. We start thinking is all about choice!

I can choose to be good. I can choose to obey God

And we fall into the biggest misconception of all - that we're still capable of choosing good rather than evil. And we're still capable of choosing God

But let's just stop for a minute and think

Can we stop ourselves from sinning against God?

No!

Can we save ourselves from the punishment of sin - which is physical death and spiritual death - separation from God?

No!

Can we save ourselves from ending up in Hell?

No!

Of course we can't - that's why we need God's Grace

We've just proven that Scripture is clear that human beings are sinful by nature and cannot save themselves or even prepare themselves to be saved, the Scriptures are equally clear that it is God who saves by Grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ Alone (Ephesians 2)

This means it is God who acts first upon sinners while the sinner is dead in sin. The Good news is that the sinner doesn't seek God first. God seeks sinners first.

Stop and think about - when you became a Christian - if you can remember - was it your idea - or was it God in His grace calling you - and drawing you to Him?

If we look at Romans 5:6-8 - the Apostle Paul puts it this way:

[Powerpoint 6-Romans 5:6-8]

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God

demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Who's making the first move here?

God of course? By sending Jesus

And when we think of Romans 3:23-24

[Powerpoint 7-Rom 3:23-24]

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

If we are all sinful and fall short of God's standards - how can we save ourselves?

We can't and that's where grace comes in - Paul says - we are justified by grace by Jesus buying us back from sin and death

And so the Apostle Paul explains in Romans 6:23

The difference between what we deserve and what we actually get from God

He says in Romans 6:23

[Powerpoint 8-Romans 6:23]

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (GRACE)

So our sin and rebellion against God deserves us collecting a pay packet of death - physical and spiritual death and separation from God - that's what we deserve  
But instead because of God's Grace

We are offered the GIFT of forgiveness of our sins and eternal life by believing in Jesus' death on the cross and believing His resurrection

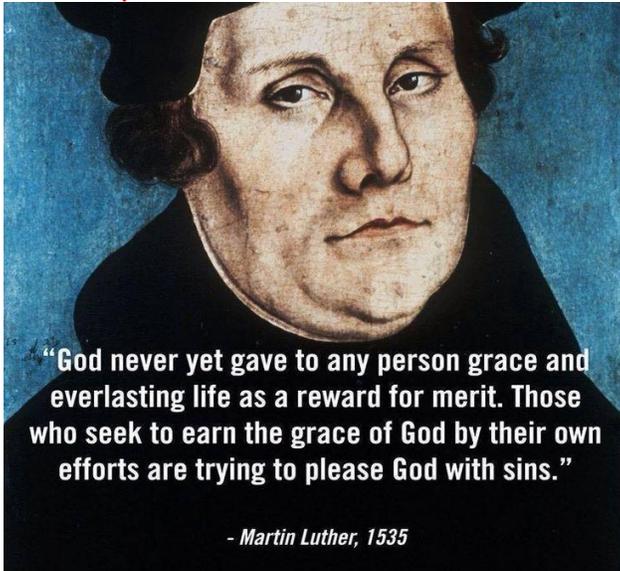
We don't deserve it - we didn't earn it - but God gives it freely to us!

GRACE ALONE

And so the Reformers understood this grace alone

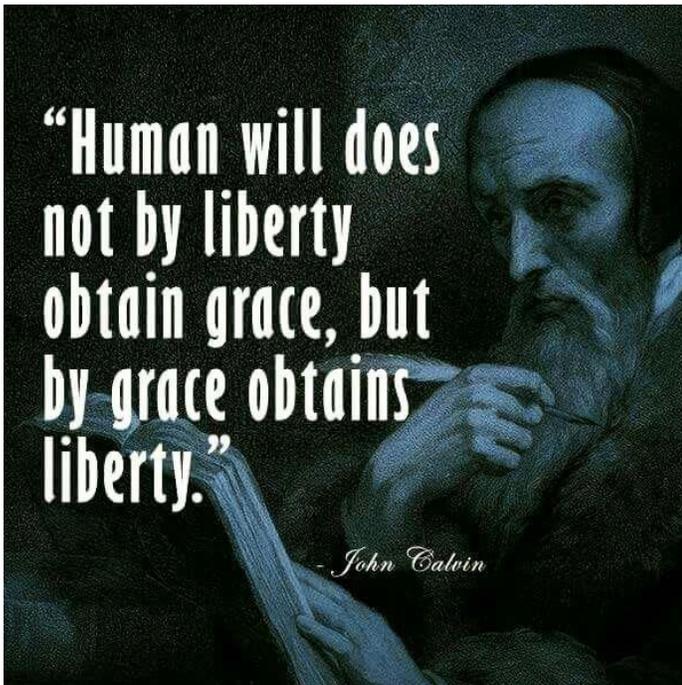
Martin Luther famously said:

[Powerpoint 9-Luther]



And John Calvin said:

[Powerpoint 10-Calvin]



## Example of Grace from OT (Deuteronomy 9:1-6)

So let's have a look at an example of God's grace from the OT

It's from our OT passage - Deuteronomy 9 - verses 1 to 6

If you'd like to turn there in your Bibles...

[Powerpoint 11-OT Grace]

The Israelites are about to cross the River Jordan and then go on into the land that God has promised them since the time of Abraham

Now remember the Israelites have been saved from slavery in Egypt - then they've wandered in the wilderness for 40 years - and they've done nothing but rebel against God and whinge and complain to Him - and they've even built a golden calf to worship - instead of worshipping God

But look what God says through Moses in v3

**But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire.**

So even though the Israelites have been sinful and rebellious - God promises to go ahead of them and make sure the enemies they face are taken care of so they can possess the Promised Land

The Israelites don't deserve that

But God promises His help and protection

That's Grace!

Then look at v5 - God says through Moses:

**<sup>5</sup> It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land (GRACE)**

So again God's saying it's not because of anything good in you, Israel, that you're going to take possession of the land. It's my grace!

And He goes on to say in v6

**<sup>6</sup> Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people (GRACE).**

Because of God's grace Israel is allowed to enter the Promised Land despite their sin and rebellion

In the same way because of God's grace -WE are allowed to enter our Promised Land of Heaven - if we accept the free gift of grace - that God gives us in Jesus!

### **The Ultimate Act of Grace (Romans 5:12-21)**

And that brings us to our NT passage from Romans 5:12-21 - and God's ultimate act of grace

If you'd like to turn to this passage - Romans 5:12-21

[Powerpoint 12-Ultimate Grace]

Paul says in v12 - Sin came into the world through the sin of one man - ADAM - and because of that original sin - death - physical and spiritual death - came to everyone - because we all sin

And Paul goes on to say in verses 13-14 that even though it wasn't clear what God's law was - until Moses' time - Adam's sin meant that there was separation from human kind and God. But Paul says, Adam who got humankind into this mess points ahead to the One who will get us out of this mess.

That Someone - Paul says in v15 to 21 - is a gift of grace - an undeserved favour from God - by sending His Son, Jesus Christ. And this grace gift of Jesus - brought justification. It means people who believe in Jesus are seen as if they haven't sinned (Illustration of handkerchief)

And belief in Jesus brings the gift of living forever in Heaven with God  
It's not anything we do or earn - it's all a gift from God

Why would God do that?

Because as John 3:16 says - God loved the people of the world so much - he wanted a relationship with people - so He sent His son to fix that relationship and offer forgiveness and eternal life

Because as John 15:13 says - there's no greater love than laying down your life for your friends - Jesus laid down His life for everyone - who wishes to accept the gift of grace on offer

Because Jesus came to this earth to seek and save people lost from God (Luke 19:10)

Because God made a promise to the OT patriarch Abraham that all people would be blessed through one of Abraham's descendants - if they have faith like Abraham did

### **Our Response to God's Grace**

How should we respond to God's grace then?

#### **[Powerpoint 13a-Response]**

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 6:1

**Shall we go on sinning so that we get even more grace!**

What Paul's getting at is that we could keep on sinning because we know God is gracious and merciful and loving

But Paul says no by no means should we do that! (6:2)

When we accept Jesus' gift of grace - our old sinful self is buried in Jesus' death and we are a new creation - born from above - born from the Spirit

Sin doesn't go with grace!

So our response **MUST** be

A transformed life

#### **[Powerpoint 13b-Lives of thanks]**

As Christians, whose sins are forgiven, we should now live in holy, obedient gratitude for the grace we have received. Grateful law-keeping is the saved sinner's response to received grace. The rest of our lives are a way of saying, "Thank you Jesus."

If God is full of grace. And we were born in His image,

It means our new life in Jesus - through God's grace - should be seen in our relationships

#### **[Powerpoint 13c-Love not evil]**

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:9-10

**<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.**

And in Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*A soldier made it his practice to end each day with Bible reading and prayer. As the others gathered in the barracks and retired for the night, he'd kneel by his bunk. Some of them saw this and began to mock him. But one night the abuse went beyond words. As he bowed in prayer one soldier threw his boots and hit him in the face. The others jeered, looking for a fight, but there was no retaliation. The next morning when the boot-thrower woke up he couldn't believe what he saw. There at the foot of his bed were his boots - polished and returned.*

The point is - answering people's hatred and evil against us - with grace - may win them into a relationship with Jesus

(pause)

[Powerpoint 13d-Follow Jesus example]

So let's be imitators of Jesus Christ - as Paul says in 1 Cor 11:1:

<sup>1</sup> Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

And as Paul says in Ephesians 5:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children<sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ask ourselves in every situation - what would Jesus say, what would Jesus think, what would Jesus do?

[Powerpoint 13e-Love covers sins/He loved us first]

And remember as Peter says in 1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

And remember as John says in 1 John 4:19

We love because He loves first

Let's pray...