

# THE FIVE SOLAS ~ SOLA GRATIA

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*We believe that it was grace that provided a Savior, that it was grace that paid the price of our redemption, that it is grace that begins, carries on, and finishes the sinner's salvation, so that salvation from its original and from its first ray of heavenly light which dawns upon the sinner on earth, until a crown of glory is put upon his head in heaven, is all grace, pure unmixed grace. (Moses Hoge)*

## Introductory

God's salvation is a matter of grace; a gift; freely bestowed; God's salvation is not a matter at all of being earned, deserved, or merited by the sinner. Man's unwillingness to believe the freeness of salvation. The Scriptures address an undoing of grace alone:

- Romans 4:4
- Romans 11:6
- Galatians 2:21
- Galatians 5:4

## Grace a Full Concept

1. Reflected in our hymnody: converting grace, covenant of grace, efficacious grace, fullness of grace, magnified grace, refreshing grace, regenerating grace, sanctifying grace, saving grace, sovereign grace, and awakening grace (for instance, Francis Scott Key's song):

*Praise the grace whose threats alarmed thee,  
Roused thee from thy fatal ease,  
Praise the grace whose promise warmed thee,  
Praise the grace that whispered peace.*

2. Sola Gratia used in several applications in Reformation theology. There are three areas in particular where grace historically has needed defending:
  - a. The gracious nature of \_\_\_\_\_, or salvation from all eternity; a gracious, free, unmerited authoring and choosing before the world began (Eph. 1:5-6; Rom. 11:5)
  - b. The gracious nature of the great \_\_\_\_\_ that takes place which rescues the blind, reclaims the rebellious, and raises the spiritually dead, providing all in Christ for a new heart, new record, and a new life. Romans 9:16
  - c. The gracious nature of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the saints – Romans 5:2ff.

## Reformation's Parting with Medieval Views on Grace:

1. The RCC came to view grace as a substance in the soul that needed to be nurtured by good deeds, piety and penance, rather than an attribute and disposition in God toward unworthy sinners.
2. This grew out of a long history where moralism crept into the church in the form of Pelagianism, teaching that grace was a power given to man to do good and abstain from sin; that God basically

helps those who help themselves. \_\_\_\_\_ withstood this very strongly and biblically, especially in referring all back to the predestination by grace, but the church, while condemning Pelagianism itself, fell into a sacramental system of grace beginning in baptism. Man's co-operating with the grace of God and God's grace being resistible were adopted. See Berkhof, p. 429

3. Luther's rediscovery of the righteousness of God in the gospel being a gift and not an attribute of God undermined this sacramental system. But it was his breach with the humanist Erasmus that brought out and cut the central nerve of merit-based salvation, in Luther's "Bondage of the Will." (See handout 12-15 of TJ, CTP)

## Amazing Grace or Boring Grace?

1. Is salvation a mechanical matter? Or is it clearly the personal and triune God of the Bible who is actively seeking, saving, and securing a great host?
2. The Roman Catholics have not been the only ones who have watered down the horrific picture of man's lost estate, but are joined by modern evangelicals.
3. TJ on the character of fallen man as Dead, Defiant, and Doomed. The question arises: does God owe this man salvation? Must he be given a chance to be saved? Once grace is owed, it is no longer grace! Once God must give grace, it is no longer grace! "Unfair" is a word which should never be permitted in these questions, but instead it serves as the bedrock of many, man-centered views.
4. Our understanding of grace and sin are tied together in an entirely different way than an Arminian one – we see how grace must bring conviction of sin as sin, arousing fear of the judgment, curse and wrath of God, and especially revealing our helplessness before the Lord. Even then one will not cry out to the Lord unless the Father draws him, causing him to approach Christ freely offered as Savior and Sanctifier. So how fully the Father's love that saved His very enemy! How fully the Son's love is our full Savior, our King of grace, having all thing in Him! How fully the Spirit of grace refuses ever to leave or forsake the saved soul, no matter how much they deserve otherwise!
5. Seeing salvation from God's side helps us avoid the simple traps of turning conversion into a work for which we are mechanistically rewarded. Regeneration, repentance, faith, conversion are not preparations for the covenantal bond with God through Christ; these are rather the benefits of the covenantal bond through Christ applied graciously, freely, sovereignly by the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Regeneration a gift of grace (Ezk. 36:26 "give"; Eph. 2:5)
  - b. Repentance a gift of God (Acts 15:11 + 11:18)
  - c. Conversion a gift of the Lord (Psalm 19:7; John 12:40)
  - d. Faith a gift from above and not a work from below (Phil. 1:29; Acts 13:48; Eph. 2:8).
  - e. Perseverance is God's work and not ours (Phil 1:6).