

Sola Gratia

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[0:00] Well, we are going through the five solas of the Reformation. And last week we looked at the very first one, Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone.

And basically what that doctrine teaches is that the Bible and the Bible alone is our final authority in this matter of salvation.

Where do we learn about God? Where do we learn what God requires of us? Where do we learn about the gospel and the way of salvation? Well, it's in the Scripture alone.

No church has equal authority. No pastor, no man. The Scriptures alone. The written Word of God.

The written Word of God. Well, today we're moving on to grace alone. Grace alone. And I want to begin with a thought experiment.

[0:53] And I want you to imagine that we stuck a whole bunch of different people on an island. Sort of like a reality TV show.

And all these people on this island. And so let's just imagine that we stuck some Jehovah Witnesses and some Mormons and some maybe old mainline Episcopalians and some liberal Christians and some traditional Roman Catholics and some Hindus and some Muslims and some Disney writers and some yoga instructors.

And some factory workers and some even some even some even some even some. Armenians. Even some. What we would call one point or four point Calvinist one point Armenians is actually what they are.

And we all stuck them on an island together. Now. They'd fight about all kinds of things, wouldn't they?

They would fight about all manner of things that there's one God. No, no. There's many gods. If you're a Hindu, you believe in hundreds and millions of gods.

[2:15] There's no God at all. The Bible's true. The Bible isn't true. There is a resurrection. There's no resurrection. There's reincarnation. No, there's not.

The Pope is the head of the church. No, he's not. On and I mean, there's no end to the amount of fighting that there would be. Right. I mean, basically, if we look at human history, much of it is the history of this.

These arguments. Well, there would be a lot to fight about. But can you think of. Maybe one thing. That they wouldn't fight about.

Just one thing that maybe they wouldn't argue about. Maybe one thing that they would just all assume and say, yeah, well, of course, that's true.

Can you think of anything? Well, since I'm teaching the lesson, I have the prerogative and the understanding of where I'm going with this. So maybe you can't think of a single thing.

[3:16] There's not a whole lot that they would agree on. But I think there is one thing that they would all say, well, of course, that's true. And simply put, I think to one degree or another.

They would think. I'm not totally helpless. Not totally helpless. At the at the very bottom. There is something still OK about me.

And. And. And maybe that's a little thing. In some cases, very little. Maybe it's just a very tiny, tiny thing.

Or maybe it's a big thing. But either way. They would say, well, that is a place that I can start from. That's a place I can build on.

Now, they're going to argue about what the building looks like. And that's what really all those other arguments are about. What's this building going to look like? Some are some are going to build Christian looking buildings and some are going to build Hindu looking buildings.

[4:24] And some are even really. They're really going to be Christians. Some of them. But. If you dig away the dirt.

And the foundation is the same. I'm not helpless. There's something I can build on. And it's really up to me to build on it.

It's really up to me to do something. Now, God may help. God may give me grace. If they believe in that. But it's grace to help me.

Grace to give me a boost. Grace. To help me to build the kind of building that he wants me to build. And what I do. I do. Determines.

If I'm a success. Or a failure. What I do. Determines. What happens. So perhaps there's grace.

[5:27] Grace just means God giving me assistance. I can't do it alone. Perhaps. Oh no. But whether it gets done. Whether I'm saved.

Whether I'm worthy. Whether I'm. Whatever. Is really up to me. And if there's a God. He will judge me based on what I do.

Did I do my part? Little or big. Great or small. Did I do my part? Lord. Now. Reason I'm.

Talking about that is. Because. All of that. That whole way of thinking. That whole way of thinking that we are. All born into.

That. Unless. The Lord. Teaches us. That whole way of thinking. Martin Luther called. A theology. Of glory.

[6:24] And you already heard. About the theology of glory. And the theology of the cross. From Dr. Reeves. Presentation. A couple of weeks ago. Luther.

Martin Luther. Divided theologians. Into two different kinds. Theologians of glory. And theologians of.

The cross. And so humanity. Has. Really only heard. Two. Stories. A glory story.

And. The cross story. The glory story. It takes all different kinds of shapes and forms. I mean. That's what. I was trying to get across.

With all of these people. And. On this island. That's all the glory story. And. While they disagree with. A lot of things. They all. At the bottom.

[7:18] They agree at this one thing. That I'm not helpless. And it's really up to me. To. To get the job done. God might make it possible. God might lend a hand. But.

It's up to me. So what is the glory story? The glory story is. Well. We started in glory. We're going to glory. And. Yes. We might have had a slip.

Something has gone wrong. But we can get back. We can get back. Glory is in our reach. Success. Recreation. Salvation.

It's within our reach. We might need a little oomph. We might need positive direction. Probably. We're going to need instruction. We're going to need someone. To tell me the way to go. I need to know.

What is right. But if I know. What is right. If I know what is right. Then I can do it. Then I can do it.

[8:17] If I put forth the effort. If I do good. If I believe in myself. If I obey the commandments. If I make Jesus my Lord.

If I say a prayer. If I'm baptized. And do what the church says to do. If I go to confession. If I do whatever it is.

God will see what I have done. And God will count me worthy. Of heaven. That's what Luther called.

A theology. Of glory. You see it all over the place. See it on the yoga map.

Where. Where. As you're. Practicing yoga. The yoga practice. Ends with a person sitting cross-legged. Saying. Thank you. Not to God.

[9:16] But thank you to me. For taking this time. Of loving myself. Thank you. For this act of. Recreation. Amen. Although they knew God.

They neither glorified him as God. Nor gave. Thanks. They're thinking they're God. But it's the God within. This God of.

Of love. This God who can recreate. This God who can save. And. You see it at. Even the foot of the pulpit. Where they say.

Jesus has died for everyone. And all you need to do. Is believe. Claim it for yourself. Welcome Jesus into your heart. Jesus is knocking. Let him in.

And so. Whether the door opens or closes. Is up to me. Whether. What. What makes the ultimate decision about.

[10:20] Or who makes the ultimate decision about my salvation. Well it's me. And what makes me to differ. Well I chose. So who is making a Christian.

Well I am. I am. I'm my own creator. I'm my own savior. So. Hidden under. Every version. Of this theology of glory. Is this lie. This belief. That. I am God.

I'm God. You hear it at Disney. If you believe in yourself. You can do anything. What is that?

That's just faith. Faith. In yourself. And you have. Taken the place of God. And so the faith. That is in. That you can have in yourself. Is the kind of faith.

[11:22] That will move mountains. I. I heard it from. The Mormon elders. Talking on my doorstep.

There are these 20 year old. Young men. White shirts. Black ties. Dressed up. They. And. And. And. They end up saying. I'm doing the best I can.

Why should you go to heaven? Well. Once you. Once you dig down deep enough. They say. I'm doing the best I can. And then. Then I'm surprised that. Here are the Jehovah witnesses. Now.

These are old ladies. And. Well. Why should you. Be allowed to go into heaven? And you dig down. Past all their. Other stuff.

And they. And this is what they say. I am doing. The best. I can. Now. So. You back. Anyone. Into the corner.

[12:24] And you. You push them. And you push them. And you push them. Back to the. Into the corner. And they'll utter. This preposterous. Lie. I am doing.

The best I can. You see. Why that's a lie. Because. One. Is that blatantly. True. Is that true? Can anyone here say.

I'm doing. The best I can. And. And when you push them. Far enough. It comes out. As this desperate. Plea.

I mean. Well. What else is there? I'm doing. The best I can. How. Can't God. If God. If God. If God. Doesn't. Accept. Accept. Accept. The very best. I can. What am I going to do? Well. It comes out.

As this desperate. Plea. But really. It's this very. Self-exalting. Lie. Well. That's why God. Will let me. Into heaven. I'm worthy.

[13:22] I'm doing. The best I can. And that's a theology. Of glory. It's this delusion. Of grandeur. That I am God. And I'm doing the best I can. And because. And that's got to be good enough.

Now. It's really this issue. We are moving to grace alone. But I want you to see. That grace alone. Is only done in contrast. To all the other. To the other story.

Now. It's really this issue. That Martin Luther. And Erasmus. Of Rotterdam. Argued about. Now. Maybe you haven't heard. About this debate. Maybe you haven't heard. About this back and forth.

But it's a very important one. In Reformation history. So. Erasmus. Of Rotterdam. Was a very well respected. Scholar. And. The. The Roman Catholics.

Were begging. And pleading. The great. And the wise. And the careful. Erasmus. To come. To their defense. They'd seen. What Martin Luther.

[14:21] Had done. They'd heard. His theology. And. To a. Great degree. People were. A bit of. At a loss. They were in. Over their heads. But then they said. You know what. Erasmus. Is very smart.

And he is obviously. Reform minded. Erasmus. Was not happy. With the situation. In the Roman Catholic Church. And so. Maybe. Erasmus. Can. Bring Martin Luther.

Around. Maybe. He can answer him. And at first. Erasmus. Really hesitated. He didn't want. Anything to do. With this. He hesitated.

And I. I. Always. Honestly. I feel sorry for him. Because he was not the kind of. He was not Martin Luther. That wasn't his. His.

Personality. And I think all of this. Was a little too serious. For him. He liked to. Tease. And he liked to make fun of.

[15:16] The Roman Catholic Church. He liked to take pot shots. At the Roman Catholic Church. He liked translating. And he liked reading. And really.

He did a great service. He. He. Published. A Greek version. In the New Testament. Which. So many people. Used. As the basis of.

Their translations. Into the common language. And he liked doing these things. But. But a blood. Earnest. Really serious. Debate. With this crazy German.

Was not what he had signed up for. Okay. But at last. Because he couldn't resist the pressure anymore. He wrote a little book. Basically.

On the freedom of the will. On the freedom of the will. And he said. Now. You know. There's not. There's maybe not a lot. We can agree on. You know. We have some big differences.

[16:11] Between us. But. But isn't it clear. We can agree on this. We can agree on this. Isn't it common sense. That we have free will.

And yes. It can't do much. In the matter of salvation. It's not very strong. It's not very great. It can only do a little. But it's still there.

And we need to exercise it. If we are going to be saved. We need to exercise it. If. We are going to show God. That we are serious about salvation.

Now. If Erasmus wanted to make peace. And bring this Luther guy back. Into the fold. And calm him down. He really couldn't have done. A worse job.

And. Luther finally said. Or. Yeah. Martin Luther finally. Was like. At last. At last. Someone.

[17:13] Is actually talking about. What this is all about. Finally. Someone has said. What needs to be said. Finally. Someone is getting down. To what we are talking about.

And he wrote back. Martin Luther wrote back. In response. This. This masterpiece. Of sovereign grace. And it's all about.

God. Being God. God. God is God. And in some ways. It's just this long. Very in depth. Thinking of.

Be still. And know that. I am God. So God is God. And man. Is man. Man. The name of the. The book. In opposition to.

Arasimus. Is the freedom of the will. It was. The bondage of the will. And in that book. Luther. Paints. This picture. That. You know what. It is.

[18:11] God. Who saves. It's God. Who saves. And it's man. Who is saved. And there's. There's no sharing. There's no blurring.

There's not a little on this side. And. And maybe a lot on that side. Or a little here. And a little there. It's not just a little free will. A little. Unfallen. Bit of me.

A little. Bit of me. That. Is not. Tainted. And corrupted. And. Dead. In sin. Just this. There's none of that. Because all of that.

That. That. That little bit of will. That says. You know what. I. I. I can do what needs. I can take the first step. I have to take the first step. I can take the first step.

That leaves man. In his. Delusion of grandeur. It leaves man. Thinking. Finally.

[19:13] When it's all. Put down. It's going to be up to me. No. He said. God is God.

And man is not. And God saves. And man. Is saved. It's grace.

Alone. It's grace. Alone. It's sheer. Unadulterated. Naked. Naked. Naked.

Pure. Mercy. Salvation. Is ultimately. All. One way. Mercy. From God.

To man. Men are dead. And God saves them. It's all. Grace alone. Through Christ's cross. Alone. To the glory.

[20:08] Of God. Alone. Alone. There is. No glory. Story. There's only one true story. And he says. It's the cross. It's the cross story.

God saves. Sinful men. Through. The cross. Period. Full stop. No exceptions. It's grace alone. And so. What is our part then?

We ask. Well. Isn't there something for us? Well. What is my part? What is man's part? Well. J.I. Packer. In his introduction. To. The bondage of the will.

Says this. Man's part. Therefore. Is to humble. His proud. Mind.

To renounce. The sinful. Self-sufficiency. Which prompts him. To treat himself. As the measure.

[21:03] Of all things. To confess. The blindness. Of his corrupt heart. And thankfully. To receive. The enlightening. Word of God.

Man is by nature. As completely. Unable. To know God. As to please God. What Packer is saying is.

Man is so far from. Really. Really. Choosing God. That he's not even able to know him. Let alone. To please him. Let him face the fact.

And admit it. Let God be God. Let man be man. Let ruined. Sinners. Stop.

Pretending. To be something. Other. Than ruined. Sinners. Let them realize. That they lie. Helpless. In the hand.

[22:02] Of an angry creator. Let them seek Christ. And cry. For mercy. So the glory story.

Where. I'm all. I'm pretty all right. And I can do what needs done. It's. It's a pretend story. It's man. Pretending to be something. That he's not.

It's that sinful. Self-sufficiency. That diluted. Self-sufficiency. So the cross story. Is the only story. Where we are. What we are.

And we are. Ruined sinners. Helpless. Powerless sinners. So helpless. So hopeless. So needy. That God. Had to save. Through sacrificing.

Sacrificing. His own son. It was all him. It was all him. And so what part. See the cross story now.

[22:59] Is replacing. The glory story. What part did man play. In the cross. Let me ask you that. What part did we play. In the cross.

In the crucifixion. Of Jesus Christ. We put him there. We can mean that. In two different ways. We can mean it.

And. It was sinful. Humanity. Who murdered him. We can say that. And we can also say. It was my sin. That held him there. All we contributed.

To our salvation. As the sin. That made it necessary. And now. It's through the proclamation.

[23:54] Proclamation. Of the cross. The preaching. Of the cross. The preaching. That God. Saves. Sinful. Men. That God.

Draws. Man. Back to himself. It's through preaching that. That God. Then saves men. Now. Turn in your Bibles. To first Corinthians.

First Corinthians. And. You see. First Corinthians. Chapter one. You see. The glory story. And the cross story. Put side by side. In first Corinthians. Chapter one. And.

I really think. That the. The reason. That Paul. Is saying. So much. Of what he's saying. Here. In this whole section. Is because. Even though. The Corinthian church. They're.

[24:54] They're really. Christians. For the. I think. For the most part. God. Had done. A wonderful work. But. Yet. There was still.

That. Glory story. Going on. In their hearts. Controlling. Them. And so. Now. There are. Divisions. And confusion. And men. Boasting. And.

That is. The work. Not of the cross. But a men. Being proud. And men. Saying. Well. I'm doing the right thing. But you're not doing the right thing. And really. You got to do it. My way.

Or. You know. So. Now. Paul. Has to say. You know what. We need to boil this down. And to say. Okay. What is. What. What's the big distinction here.

You need to stop. Thinking. You're something. So. First Corinthians. Chapter 18. Our first Corinthians. Chapter 1. Verse 18. And. Let me just read.

[25:47] A few. Verses here. And I want you to see. It's the. The glory story. About man's pride. And man's ability. And what man has to do. And then on the other side of it.

Is the cross. For the message. Of the cross. Is foolishness. To those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved. It is the power of God. For it is written. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. The intelligence of the intelligent.

I will frustrate. Where is. The wise man. Where is the scholar. Where is the philosopher. Of this age. Has not God made foolish.

The wisdom of the world. For since in the wisdom of God. The world through its wisdom. Did not know him. God was pleased.

[26 : 44] Through the foolishness. Of what was preached. To save those who believe. Jews. Demand. Miraculous signs. And Greeks.

Look. For wisdom. That's where we're going to stop. For. For now. Now. He's saying. Jews and Greeks are very different. Jews.

Want a sign. Of God's power. Greeks are always talking about. Wisdom. They're very different. But really. They're both telling. The very same story. Greeks are saying.

We need wisdom. We need to search out. These things. And we can search them out. If we try hard enough. It's all about human learning. It's all about human.

Scientific progress. And human learning. And it's come on. We can do it. And with the Jews. It's. Obey the law.

[27 : 40] Come on. We can do it. We need to instruct people. But come on. God will even help you. We can do it. Verse 23.

Jews demand miraculous signs. And Greeks look for wisdom. But we. Preach. Christ. Crucified. A stumbling block to Jews.

And foolishness to Gentiles. But to those whom God has called. Both Jews and Greeks. Christ. The power.

Of God. And the wisdom. Of God. For the foolishness. Of God. Is wiser. Than man's wisdom. And the weakness. Of God. Is stronger. Than man's. Strength. And so he says.

In the face of all that. We. Preach. Christ. That's our message. We preach Christ. And Jews and Greeks. Say it's folly. They say it's weak.

[28 : 38] It can't do anything. How do you expect it to do anything? What part do we play? And if we don't play a part. How is it going to make. How is that actually going to happen? The final power is our power. But. What is the cross?

It's the wisdom. And the power. Of God. In action. And what does. It do? The cross actually saves.

It actually rescues. It doesn't leave man. It doesn't leave us. Grasping. For more to do. And it doesn't make salvation.

Possible. For everyone. But not effective. For anyone. No. It actually. Is the powerful. Effective. Salvation.

Of sinners. It saves. And so with the Jews. And the Greeks. It's always a little bit more. It's always a little bit more.

[29 : 37] A bit further. But the cross. It's always a little bit more. It's always a little bit more. It's always a little bit more. And through the cross. And the preaching of the cross. Through preaching about men's helplessness.

And Christ's death. On sinners behalf. God actually saves. All who believe. Now. The cross turns the world on its head.

So we're going to keep reading. Brothers. Think of what you were. When you were called. Not many of you were wise.

By human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things. Of the world.

To shame the wise. God chose the weak things. Of the world. To shame the strong. He chose the lowly things. Of this world. And the despised things. And the things that are not.

[30 : 36] To nullify the things that are. So that no one may boast before him. It is because of him. That you are in Christ Jesus.

Who has become for us. Wisdom from God. That is our righteousness. Holiness. And redemption. Therefore as it is written.

Let him who boasts. Boasts. Boasts. In the Lord. So where is the boasting? Where. What are men looking to?

Well. In the. In the glory story. Men are looking at their own wisdom. And their own strength. But in the cross story.

It's all about Jesus. Jesus. He. Has become our righteousness. Just him. And he has become our wisdom.

[31 : 34] I don't have wisdom. I don't have the wisdom to save myself. But he's the wisdom of God. He has become our redemption. And therefore. There's. It. It. It's all grace. It's all him.

It's all what he did. It's all mercy from him. It's all his love. And so. There's no boasting.

There's no boasting. We didn't plan our salvation. God planned our salvation.

And. We didn't. Bring the savior down. God sent him down. The incarnation was quite a surprise.

And we didn't. Manage. The cross and the resurrection. We didn't do that. It was all.

[32 : 40] Grace. It was all grace. It was all on God's side. It was his plan. It was his will. It was his mercy. It was his salvation.

He did it. It's grace alone. And so grace says. Look. It's all. Done. So. What is there to preach?

What is there to preach? Now let's. Keep going. First Corinthians chapter two. Verse one. When I came to you brothers. I did not come with eloquence.

Or superior wisdom. As I proclaim to you the testimony. About God. For I resolved. To know nothing. While I was with you.

Except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear. And with much trembling. And my message and my preaching. Were not with wise. And persuasive words.

[33 : 39] But with the demonstration of the spirit's power. So that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom. But on God's power. So. What is the message of salvation?

He said it. I preach Christ. And him crucified. Luther said. The cross. The cross. Alone. Is our theology.

Obviously. Would want to explain what he meant. But. It's grace alone. Because. It's the cross alone.

and it's not the cross in my will and it's not the cross in my works it's not the cross in my efforts my choice and so many Christians put cross plus something cross plus my prayers in their everyday life the cross plus my devotions the cross plus how I did today but the message is not a message about ourselves the message is about Jesus Christ and him crucified and that's it, it's grace alone it's all about what he's done for us and so there's no more thinking I have to make myself worthy of it we're not worthy of it and we could never be worthy of it and there's no preparing myself to receive grace as if, okay, I need to lay the foundation and if I do everything right maybe I can invite down God's grace there's not that either

I can't even do that there's no more looking in do I feel saved? do I feel bad enough? I certainly need to feel more I need something here it's all this inward look am I elect?

[35:34] am I doing what God wants me to do to be saved? no, it's none of that the cross cuts through all of that and it stands there so alone and solitary and it says it's just that the cross Jesus and him crucified that's why and that's how you can be saved and the gospel looks on him and it says he's done enough he's done all that needs to be done it's him now in 1518 Luther participated in what was called the Heidelberg Disputation and that's just like a chance for scholars to talk and and probably after the bondage of the will it's probably one of the clearest or at least one of the most precise examples of of his change in thinking from I'm a monk and I need to save myself by being a monk to just the gospel and in that disputation he wrote this thesis number 26 the law says do this and it's never done grace says believe in this and everything is already done now if you read and if you if you read even

Luther's sermons you know he he took obeying the commandments seriously he said we need to preach this and people need to understand it and the law is holy righteous and good Romans says it's good and it says do this honor your father and your mother love the Lord your God with all your heart but it's never done the law comes to sinful people and says this is the terms the man who does these things will live by them Galatians chapter 3 the man who does these things will live by them and what we do because we are so in love with ourselves and our own abilities and our own thoughts we are so drunk on this glory story that instead of hearing that and despairing and saying I can't do that we we hear it and we say okay

I'll do it easy enough and what Luther says but it's never done it's not done in the sense of you don't do it and it's not ever done in the sense of you know what you have to obey and you have to keep on obeying and there's no end to the obedience and if you mess up one time you don't get to live it's never done but grace is different it doesn't point to us to do something it says believe in something already done Jesus has come forth we didn't call him God sent him we didn't plan salvation God planned salvation we didn't manage the cross and the resurrection it was all grace and it says look it's all done all done believe it and then when it comes to us individually individually it's grace that we're saved it's always grace alone not merit not earning it's just mercy listen to Samuel Rutherford

I know we have to keep going here listen to Samuel Rutherford I find Christ to be Christ and that he is far far even heaven's height above man and that is all our happiness sinners can do nothing but make wounds that Christ may heal them and make debts that he may pay them and make falls that he may raise them and make deaths that he may quicken them and spin out and dig hells to themselves that he may ransom them so what are we well by nature we're just wounds and debt and death and hell that's all that's all we are apart from Christ and with that in view we say thank God for his mercy and so when it comes to us personally it's all grace

Ephesians 2 for it is by grace you've been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves it is the gift of God not by works so that no one can boast Titus 3 5 he saved us not because of the righteous things we had done but because of his mercy Paul knew it personally I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength that he considered me faithful appointing me to his service even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus it's not my will it's not my choice James 1 18 he chose to give us birth through the word of truth and he didn't choose us because we were holy for he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and to the in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves so it's it's grace alone it's all him and that is the best news that we could ever hear and so we want to rejoice in that today and give him the glory we're dismissed you