

# Sola gratia

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Date: 26 November 2023

Preacher: Daniel Chapallaz

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. ...verses this morning at the very beginning of our service and we come back to them at the very end of our day.

Ephesians 2, 1 to 10. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

[ 2 : 02 ] For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God.

Not by work so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Last week, Becky and I were at a wedding. The guy who was getting married, I was at his stag do just over a month or so ago.

And we had a meal together at Pizza Express. A wonderful meal, three courses, starter, pizza and dessert. And then the bill came out at the end.

There's 20 of us. It was over 600 pounds. I can't remember exactly how much it was. And as we were working out how much each of us owed, someone at the end of the table, who I've not met before, spoke to the waitress.

[ 3 : 17 ] She got the card machine out. And he got his card out. And I was like, surely not. But he did. He paid.

It was extraordinary. Extraordinary kindness from someone I've never met before. Similar thing happened at a stag do for me, but it was just me that was paid for.

Everybody else had to pay their own. And I can understand that kind of thing. Why pay for everybody's? It's over 600 pounds. But it was extraordinary kindness.

I didn't do anything to earn him paying for my meal at all. I was just there. And that's just a very little picture of God's grace.

Which is a gift from God. Verse 8. For it is by God's grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves.

[ 4 : 24 ] It is a gift of God's. We've done nothing to earn it. In fact, the opposite. It was impossible for us to do anything to earn it.

Verse 1 says, Now I'm not very good at looking after plants.

I think I'm getting better. But the first time someone gave me a house plant, I was very excited. I thought, oh, yes, something to look after. Didn't last very long.

Within a couple of months, it was looking pretty dead. And I threw it away. There was nothing I could do to save it.

I did try. Did try and water it. For a while, nothing happening. Dead things can't save themselves. And verse 1, that's the situation.

[ 5 : 28 ] We were all once in. And as for you, you were dead in your transgressions transgressions and sins. We've disobeyed God's rule. Like Adam and Eve, we have rebelled against our Creator.

And so by nature, verse 3, we were deserving of wrath. God is a God who punishes sin.

And that's what we deserve. Adam and Eve, they were punished for their sin. They were barred from the Garden of Eden. Barred from access to God and His good creation.

Access to the tree of life. But we have seen in the Old Testament too, and we have seen in those words in John 1, that Jesus is full of grace.

God is gracious. God is gracious. And we see that here in this chapter 2. We see what God is like. We see God's character again that Paul talks about in verse 4.

[ 6 : 41 ] Because of His great love for us. God is rich in mercy. God is rich in mercy. And He's made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace, God's grace, that you have been saved. We are utterly dead in our transgressions. We have disobeyed, broken God's holy law. And yet He has made us alive in Christ.

I was speaking to someone a few weeks ago, and several times they talked about people who had done wrong to them. And so they were saying, so I will do wrong to them back.

They will face the consequences. God looks at sinful human beings, and to some, He chooses to show grace.

[ 7 : 57 ] He says they've done wrong, but I will show mercy. They can't save themselves, but I will make them alive in Christ.

Chapter 1, verse 7, In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

It's shown to us in Jesus, who has shed His blood. Jesus, full of truth and grace, goes to the cross, and it costs Him His life.

He sheds His blood for us so that we can know God's grace. You and I, we deserve to face that wrath of God's.

Justice needs to be done for sin, and it has been. Jesus has paid in full for us. Adam and Eve, they saw their nakedness and their shame before God, didn't they?

[ 9 : 28 ] They tried to cover themselves up with a few fig leaves, but God took the initiative and sacrificed an animal to clothe them.

And God has taken the initiative for us in coming down and sacrificing Himself in order that we, too, might be clothed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

That's grace. grace. That's undeserved kindness towards sinners. And so human beings, by faith alone in Christ alone, because of the riches of God's grace alone, can know forgiveness of sins.

And we see that in the Scriptures, and that's all to God's glory alone. Luther was in a system where he had to do his good works, grace achieved by what he did, by his own merits.

And John Calvin kind of responds to that kind of thinking as he looks at verse 10.

[ 10 : 42 ] He looks at the word create or created, and he says this, you see then that this word create is enough to stop the mouths and put away the cackling, such a boast of having any merit.

For when they say so, they presuppose that they were their own creatures. It's a work of God, not a work of human beings.

So silly thinking so, John Calvin is saying. Grace alone has no room for us boasting of any merit, of any work we do to save ourselves.

And so this evening, I would love us to go away and rest and rejoice in the thought of grace.

Knowing that we can go to bed this evening if we're trusting in Christ alone for salvation, we can go away in peace.

Knowing we cannot do anything more or anything less to save ourselves. It's entirely a work of His grace.

[ 12 : 01 ] Let's rejoice in that. Let's rest in that. But perhaps we kind of feel a little bit useless in all that.

We kind of are. We can't save ourselves. But it doesn't mean we just sit around and do nothing, does it? Ephesians 2 tells us that there are good works for us to do.

Not to save ourselves. Salvation is entirely God's work. It's by grace so that no one can boast, not by works.

But verse 10, for we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. Not good works that will save us, but good works in order that we may serve our God who so wonderfully saved us.

He has things for us to do, ways for us to serve Him. And we do that not because we must to save ourselves, but gladly because He has saved us.

[13:19] Gladly because He has offered up His life for us, so why wouldn't I serve Him? But my final thought in all this is we also need to pray for God to show grace to more people.

people. We could have spent a lot of time thinking about this and perhaps we can at another point in time, but God chooses people and not everybody has known God's grace.

None of us know who the elect are. God's work is mysterious. It's amazing that He saves anyone. and why me? I'm humbled by the thought of grace.

But we do know that God is a God of grace, a God who has loving kindness. and that should give us confidence in our prayers.

That verse in 2 Peter about the day of the Lord not being yet because it's a sign of His patience.

That word patience in that verse literally means long suffering.

[14:44] It's a sign of God's grace each day that goes by not wanting anyone to perish. And I think it should certainly first of all drive us to pray, to speak, to know that we are speaking to a God who is gracious.

And so we can know confidently in prayer and say to God Lord you are gracious please would you have mercy on this person and that person.

And that's good prayers for us to pray as we approach Christmas. Perhaps a time of year when we have more opportunities than usual to share with others about Jesus more opportunities than normal to invite people to come to church and hear the good news of the gospel.

To hear the good news of a God of grace of Jesus who's come into the world full of grace and truth.

And so over this these next few weeks as we think about our Christmas services let's pray

remember that we're praying to a God who is a God of grace.

It is in your nature God to show mercy so please do that upon our city upon our friends upon our family our neighbours our colleagues thanks.

[16:23] And it's also an encouragement isn't it to sow gospel seeds to invite people to come and hear about a God of grace. That's why we've got lots of flyers being printed and opportunities to share of him.

And so we pray to a God of grace. I'm going to end by doing two things.

The first is we're going to kind of just have a song playing that we can sit and listen to. Maybe we want to sing along that's fine but maybe we want to just sit and listen and respond to God quietly in our own hearts.

And then once this song's played I'd love us to call out prayers of praise to God. Praise to God for his grace.

And then after that we'll stand and sing Amazing Grace. So we'll just listen to this quietly together. Thank you.

[18:09] verses this morning at the very beginning of our service and we come back to them at the very end of our day.

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And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

[19:37] For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by work so that no one can boast, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

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In fact the opposite. It was impossible for us to do anything to earn it. Verse 1 says as for you you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

[ 22 : 22 ] Now I'm not very good at looking after plants. I think I'm getting better. But the first time someone gave me a house plant. I was very excited.

I thought oh yes something to look after. Didn't last very long. Within a couple of months it was looking pretty dead. And I threw it away.

There was nothing I could do to save it. I did try to try and water it. For a while nothing happening. Dead things can't save themselves.

And verse 1 that's the situation. We were all once in. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. We've disobeyed God's rule.

Like Adam and Eve we have rebelled against our creator. And so by nature verse 3 we were deserving of wrath.

[ 23 : 24 ] God is a God who punishes sin. And that's what we deserve. Adam and Eve, they were punished for their sin.

They were barred from the Garden of Eden, barred from access to God and his good creation, access to the tree of life. life. But we have seen in the Old Testament 2 and we have seen in those words in John 1 that Jesus is full of grace.

God is gracious. And we see that here in this chapter 2. we see what God is like. We see God's character again that Paul talks about in verse 4 because of his great love for us.

God is rich in mercy. And he's made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace, God's grace that you have been saved. We are utterly dead in our transgressions.

[ 24 : 45 ] We have disobeyed, broken God's holy law and yet he has made us alive in Christ.

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They will face the consequences. God looks at sinful human beings and to some he chooses to show grace.

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[ 26 : 11 ] It's shown to us in Jesus who has shed his blood. Jesus full of truth and grace goes to the cross and it costs him his life.

He sheds his blood for us so that we can know God's grace. You and I we deserve to face that wrath of God's.

Justice needs to be done for sin and it has been. Jesus has paid in full for us. Adam and Eve they saw their nakedness and their shame before God didn't they?

They tried to cover themselves up with a few fig leaves but God took the initiative and sacrificed an animal to clothe them and God has taken the initiative for us in coming down and sacrificing himself in order that we too might be clothed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

That's grace. That's undeserved kindness towards sinners. And so human beings by faith alone in Christ alone because of the riches of God's grace alone can know forgiveness of sins and we see that in the scriptures and that's all to God's glory alone.

[ 27 : 52 ] Luther was in a system where he had to do his good works grace achieved by what he did by his own merits and John Calvin kind of responds to that kind of thinking as he looks at verse 10 he looks at the word create or created and he says this you see then that this word create is enough to stop the mouths and put away the cackling such a boast of having any merit for when they say so they presuppose that they were their own creatures it's a work of God not a work of human beings so silly thinking so John Calvin is saying grace alone has no room for us boasting of any merit of any work we do to save ourselves and so this evening

I would love us to go away and rest and rejoice in the thought of grace knowing that we can go to bed this evening if we're trusting in Christ alone for salvation we can go away in peace knowing we cannot do anything more or anything less to save ourselves it's entirely a work of his grace let's rejoice in that let's rest in that but perhaps we kind of feel a little bit useless in all that we kind of are we can't save ourselves but it doesn't mean we just sit around and do nothing does it Ephesians 2 tells us that there are good works for us to do not to save ourselves salvation is entirely God's work it's by grace so that no one can boast not by works but verse 10 for we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do not good works that will save us but good works in order that we may serve our God who so wonderfully saved us he has things for us to do ways for us to serve him and we do that not because we must to save ourselves but gladly because he has saved us gladly because he has offered up his life for us so why wouldn't I serve him but my final thought in all this is we also need to pray for God to show grace to more people we could have spent a lot of time thinking about this and perhaps we can at another point in time but

God chooses people and not everybody has known God's grace none of us know who the elect are God's work is mysterious it's amazing that he saves anyone why me I'm humbled by the thought of grace but we do know that God is a God of grace a God who has loving kindness and that should give us confidence in our prayers that verse in 2 Peter about the day of the Lord not being yet because it's a sign of his patience that word patience in that verse literally means long suffering it's a sign of God's grace each day that goes by not wanting anyone to perish and I think it should certainly first of all drive us to pray to speak to know that we are speaking to a God who is gracious and so we can know confidently in prayer and say to God Lord you are gracious please would you have mercy on this person and that person and that's good prayers for us to pray as we approach Christmas perhaps a time of year when we have more opportunities than usual to share with others about Jesus more opportunities than normal to invite people to come to church and hear the good news of the gospel to hear the good news of a God of grace of Jesus who's come into the world full of grace and truth and so over this these next few weeks as we think about our Christmas services let's pray remember that we're praying to a God who is a [ 33 : 40 ] God of grace it is in your nature God to show mercy so please do that upon our city upon our friends upon our family our neighbors our colleagues and it's also an encouragement isn't it to sow gospel seeds to invite people to come and hear about a God of grace grace that's why we've got lots of flyers being printed and opportunities to share of him and so we pray to a God of grace we're going to end by doing two things the first is we're going to kind of just have a song playing that we can sit and listen to maybe we want to sing along that's fine but maybe we want to just sit and listen and respond to God quietly in our own hearts and then once this song's played

I'd love us to call out prayers of praise to God praise to God for his grace and then after that we'll stand and sing amazing grace so we'll just listen to this quietly together