

The Protestant Reformation

What It is and Why it Matters

A Study

Part 4- The Re-Discovery of the Majesty and Magnificence of Grace

“Sola Gratia”

January 25, 2015

Romans 3:19-28

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

To the Glory of God

Now over the past 43 years of my Christian experience- every single person that I have met- who attends any Church- tells me that they believe in Grace. The Grace of God is *the* single most talked about and sung about subject in the history of the Church. People in Church from every stripe imaginable say that they believe in Grace. In fact- I have never met a single person who was a part of any Church- who did *not* believe in Grace.

And yet if you take the time to actually discuss it with them- very few- I mean a microscopic few- people of the modern Church can even discuss the issue of Grace in more than one or two word sentences. The *vagueness* in which people talk about and understand Grace is amazing- since everybody says that it is so important. And the trite generalities in which people discuss the Grace of God is breathtaking- since everybody upholds it in their speaking and singing.

And so I am here today to report to you the sad news that the single most important subject of the entire Christian lexicon- the Grace of God- is not well known or well understood by the average believer who sits on the average pew of the average church in America today. It has become hidden and obscure from our eyes by a thousand different viewpoints, and today people actually understand Grace *less* than they did 500 years ago.

Grace has been described as "Your own personal bailout program" by a large Christian radio network who supposedly is blazing the trail to restore godly values in America, and Grace has been marginalized by the vast majority of modern Church goers to being nothing more- in practice- than "leniency"- where sin no longer matters and where genuinely pursuing righteousness after Salvation is likened to being legalistic bondage.

Conduct this test yourself and ask people who say they are saved to describe the Grace of God. And whereas you will get very *sincere* answers- and a whole host of personal opinions- it is almost certain that you won't get many biblical answers.

And as sad as that is- that is the way it was with the visible and tangible Church back in the 1500's. The sum total of all that they were teaching and all that they were doing in Church 500 years ago was to either *hide* or *minimize* or outright *ignore* the Grace of God. With their emphasis on the Sacraments and the color of their ecclesiastical

garments and with the focus on protocol versus Truth- the Grace of God became hidden to the Church.

And so God moved upon men to stand up and by a sovereign Act of His Power- God placed a hunger for Truth in their hearts, and God used these men to rescue His Church from the darkness into which it had descended and to *re-discover* the majesty and the magnificence of the Grace of God.

Now we are taking a short vacation from our "journey" through the Gospel of Luke to begin this new year by examining The Protestant Reformation. And we have already found out a number of very important issues.

We have found that the Protestant Reformation was *not* simply a *misunderstanding* over issues that don't really matter. It was *not* a *political* argument over who was supposed to be the king. And it was *not* a dispute over personalities. Protestants and Catholics are *not* divided because of some ignorant bias or some prejudice or bigotry. We are divided over two main issues:

1. How lost people are forgiven and saved
2. Who or what has final Authority in the Church

And those are heady and weighty and eternal issues that *transcend* personalities and politics. And these two main issues lead to other secondary but equally important issues. And so when you hear people say today that it doesn't matter if a person is a Protestant or a Catholic, and that we are all on our way to Heaven together- then know that those statements are silly and trite because they are either *minimizing* the Biblical issues that brought about the great divide or they are *ignoring* them. But the Reformation itself was not silly, it was not trite- it was huge and massive, and it should matter to us today.

Now by God's Grace- as God began to lead me out of a very sincere but unbiblical understanding of Truth some 14 years ago, and as I came to fully embrace Biblical Christianity- I basically *re-discovered* the Grace of God- which had been hidden and obscured from my eyes due to several unbiblical practices and teachings. And that *re-discovery* was- for me- a "mini-reformation".

And that is how you should look at the Protestant Reformation- it was a *re-discovery* of Biblical Truth that had become hidden and

obscure through ecclesiastical mis-management and abuse and a whole host of man-made and false teaching. So here is what you should know. The Protestant Reformation was:

- ✓ A Reformation- not a Revolt
- ✓ A "re-discovery" of Biblical Truth- not the creation of a new religion
- ✓ A Return to Scriptural Authority not a Rebellion against Christ's Church
- ✓ A sincere Call to Repentance- not an angry diatribe

But as I personally grew in *my own* re-discovered admiration and love for the majesty of God's Grace shown through Jesus Christ- I became greatly troubled to see just how few people today really understand *what* the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century was really all about, and *why* it should matter to those of us who live and breathe today. I mean, after all, we live in a technologically advanced culture of Internet and smart phones, and we are people of science, and so why should we care about what a bunch of men with beards and robes said 500 years ago- we surely have evolved way beyond all that, right?

But let me begin by saying that what was at stake 500 years ago with those men is the very *same thing* that is at stake this morning with us- which is the single greatest and most important question that anybody could ever ask or answer and that is:

How are we- who are patently sinful people going to pass through
God's Judgment on our lives?

... in other words- how are lost sinners made right with God? How does an infinitely Holy and magnificently Righteous God forgive and rescue unworthy sinners? How are human beings forgiven and justified before God? By what process? What are the elements that are and that are *not* included in that marvelous Act of Salvation?

Now as we discovered two weeks ago- based on this Passage that Brother Andy just read to you- the formula for how lost people are justified by a Holy God looks like this:

We are saved:

- ✓ By Grace alone
- ✓ Through Faith alone
- ✓ In the finished Work of Jesus Christ alone
- ✓ Absent human works

... and that is the Biblical Gospel. And I want you to try to understand how radical this was when it was first introduced by Jesus and the Apostles. And I want you to try to image the great hardship that the Apostles endured to preach and teach this. And I want you to try to appreciate the *exclusivity* of the Biblical Gospel and how at odds with every other religion and human philosophy it is and how out of sorts it is with everything that the Jews understand at that time.

The Biblical Gospel is *unique*- nothing else in all the world is like it. It runs counter-intuitive to the natural and normal impulse of fallen humanity to try to do something to earn God's Favor, and it confronts and rejects all efforts by every other religion to make people good enough to deserve Heaven. So the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ stands alone. It is taught *only* in the Christian Church and is believed *only* by Christians.

Now, so far in this series- we have talked about the great *need* for the Reformation- that the visible Church on the earth had become fat, and increased with earthly power and wealth, and had become more interested in the trappings of religiosity than they did with Divine Truth. They became more interested in holding on to political power than they did with being in right standing with God, they paid more attention to the outward demonstrations and the rituals and the ceremonies and the colors and the ecclesiastical trinkets than they did the Word of God, and they cared more for order than they did for Biblical Holiness. And so God raised up men whom He used to bring the Church back to her original state.

And two weeks ago we saw that there were two main "causes" of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago- two "sparks" that got the whole thing going; two "catalysts" that God used to ignite the fire that purified the Church:

- ✓ The "Formal Cause"
- ✓ The "Material Cause"

Another way of understanding these issues was:

- A. Who has final Authority in the Church? (Formal Cause)
- B. How are sinful people made Righteous before God? (Material Cause)

And the visible Church at that time responded by saying:

- The pope- in his capacity as the "vicar of Christ"- has final Authority in the Church and over the souls of men, over the nations of the world, and over the Scriptures themselves.
- Sinful people are made righteous before a Holy God by a lifetime of faithful participation in the Sacraments and the Mass.

And two weeks ago- we went over the Reformer's answer to that first "Cause". The Reformers said that Scripture, and Scripture *alone*, held final Authority over the Church and the souls of men and over the pope himself. And the Latin phrase that signified this "re-discovery" of the Beauty, Authority, and Sufficiency of sacred Scripture was:

"Sola Scriptura"

And from that we learned that all Church Doctrine, all Teaching, and Counseling, and all Edification done in the Church and for the saints must come from the Scriptures, and from the Scriptures alone. And that means that as "Protestants" today- as those who stand today in the line of the Reformers and as those who have not lost our "protest" against Rome in the 21st Century- we must take heed that we do not make the same mistake as the visible Church did back then, and we must remain vigilant in our day that we do not develop or formulate Doctrine or Teaching or Counseling or Edification for the Church and the people of God from:

- ✓ Church History
- ✓ Ecclesiastical Tradition
- ✓ Church Councils
- ✓ Creeds or Confessions

- ✓ Personal Opinions
- ✓ Political Considerations
- ✓ Angelic Visitations
- ✓ Personal Prophecy
- ✓ Dreams or Visions
- ✓ Best Selling "Christian" Books
- ✓ Popular Ideas

And last week- we saw that in addition to "Sola Scriptura"- we found out that the Reformers had to struggle to bring back to the forefront the re-discovery of the Biblical Gospel, and the sole means by which sinners are made righteous- and that is- "Sola Fide- by Faith alone". And today we want to explore the Majesty and Magnificence of Grace which will be summarized by the Latin phrase:

"Sola Gratia- by Grace alone"

Now as Biblical Truth began to be re-discovered throughout Germany in the early part of the 16th Century on account of what God did *by* and *through* Martin Luther- the good news of the re-captured Gospel passed over the political boundaries of Germany- primarily by using the recently invented printing press- and began to land on ears that could hear in other countries as well. And one of those countries was Switzerland.

Now if you were to travel to Switzerland today and go into the capital city of Zurich- and make your way downtown- you would see a very large and imposing cathedral- whose spires rise above every other building and is the centerpiece of the entire city.

And this cathedral is called "The Grossmunster", or "great minister" or "great cathedral". And in late 1518- a man named Ulrich Zwingli became the "people's pastor" of the Grossmunster. Now before Zwingli became the people's pastor- he was in Basil, Switzerland, where he worked with Erasmus- the man that God used to translate the New Testament into Greek. And Zwingli worked not only with Erasmus- but also with the printers who printed the Holy Bible into Greek which God used to allow His precious Word to be read and understood once again. So Zwingli was a man of the Book.

And during the years of 1514-1516- Zwingli *devoured* Erasmus' Greet text and spent every waking hour in intense study of the Scriptures. He even wrote out his own handwritten copies of all of the NT Epistles. It was during those years that he later remarked,

“I began to preach the Gospel of Christ in the year 1516 before any man in our region had so much as heard the name Luther.”

And in the last few weeks of 1518- with the Word of God fresh in his mind- Zwingli applied for an opening at the Grossmunster and he was accepted. And he stood in the pulpit of the great cathedral to preach his first sermon on January 1, 1519. And he opened the Bible at **Matthew 1:1** and began to read, and his intention was to preach through the entire New Testament during his tenure there.

But as he preached- verse by verse through every word and every sentence and every chapter of Matthew- week after week- Zwingli and the people of the Church began to discover that many of the doctrines that they had been taught all their lives were simply not in the Bible. And they also found out that many of the duties that had become mandatory for all Christians to carry out- were also not mentioned anywhere in the entire Bible. In 1523 Zwingli prepared his “*Sixty-seven Articles*” in which he used Scripture to utterly dismantle medieval Christianity including the Pope, the Mass, Monastic Orders, Celibate Clergy, the Rite of Penance, and Purgatory.

Now before the middle of the third century- there are no records whatsoever that infant baptism was being practiced by anybody. All of the many records that we *have* found- show only that believer's baptism was being carried out by the Church. But during those days- the leaders of the Church began to be disturbed that people were being baptized without truly repenting. The leaders were also concerned that people were being baptized without really understanding what they were doing and without really understanding the Christian Faith.

And so the concept was developed to give the newly converted souls a time to spend in prayer and repentance and self-denial until the day of their baptism. Many were also told to memorize the Apostle's Creed during this time so they could recite it at their baptism.

Now the length of time varied at first- but over time- it was almost *universally* accepted that the one who was to be baptized would wait

"forty days" in preparation. And the Latin word for forty was translated into Greek and then into English, and this time of reflection was called "Lent".

And Lent began at "Ash Wednesday" when the ashes from the Palm branches from the previous year's "Palm Sunday" celebration were placed upon the forehead of the one who was to be baptized to signify his humility and repentance.

So Lent began on Ash Wednesday and extended forty days until the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus was completed. So Ash Wednesday was the day where people supposedly began to fast and pray and grieve over their sins. And so the day *before* Ash Wednesday was the last day until the celebration of the Resurrection where people could sin and kick up their heels and commit outrageous acts of wickedness before they had to become pious for forty days. And so the day before Ash Wednesday became known as "Fat Tuesday", or "Mardi-Gras", which is a *religious* holiday perpetrated upon the world by a harlot and apostate religious system that has isolated itself from the authority of Scripture.

So Mardi-Gras is *not* like the Fourth of July or other secular holidays. Today the celebration of "Fat Tuesday" is a religious hoax that makes a mockery of true repentance and slanders the great Name of Jesus.

Now in the beginning- this season of Lent was encouraged by the leaders of the Church only for prospective candidates for baptism. But soon- the participation of Lent became mandatory for everybody. And if you know anything at all about things that are mandatory- the only way to maintain them being mandatory is to have penalties attached to those who do not participate. And this became true for those who either didn't participate in Lent or who didn't carry it out in the prescribed way that the leaders of the visible Church commanded and expected.

So it wasn't long before people were being excommunicated for not keeping Lent or not keeping it correctly, and so the burden of keeping Lent became the way that people could either *become* saved or stay saved. And so something that began with what I think were noble and even good ideas concerning baptism was soon corrupted and abused and perverted to become harsh and mean and cruel and hideous.

And during the early years of the 16th Century- Zwingli and the people of the Grossmunster discovered that the Bible was entirely silent

about Lent- which by that time- had become as important as Communion or Baptism in the minds of most people. And the result was that these people- led by Zwingli- began to entertain the idea that perhaps Lent was *optional* or even unimportant altogether, and in the midst of the debate- Zwingli proclaimed,

“Even if I take the Bible and shake it- Lent will not fall out!”

... and this first step ignited a path that led them to re-discover the Grace of God that had been hidden.

Now back in the 16th Century- the secular government of Zurich consisted of “councils”. And so what was going on inside the Church- affected the city, and so the city called for two meetings called “The First and Second Disputations” so that Zwingli could present his radical views on Grace against the established Roman churches. And after the first Disputation- Zwingli won because he used the Scriptures while all that the Romans had was church history and tradition.

So the city council moved to actually vote to become a “Reformed City” governed not by the will of Man- but by the Word of God. And once Zurich fell from the Roman grip- the other Swiss cities began to follow and soon the Biblical teachings of the Reformation dominated Switzerland.

Now as this issue developed- it was, at first, simply covering the issue of already saved people keeping Lent. But as they continued to explore what the Bible actually said- they began to see that Grace was the “agent” or the “catalyst” or the “means” by which God saved the lost in the first place. And I would suggest to you that that is *exactly* what the issue is in our own day as Grace has once again been hidden and marginalized by many in the visible Church.

And the discussion then, as well as now, centers around what the Apostle Paul taught about Salvation in **Ephesians 2:1-10**- so let’s go there and read that passage together:

**1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,
according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now
working in the sons of disobedience.**

3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Now, first of all- notice just *how* the Apostle teaches that human beings are saved. Paul says here in verse 8 that we are saved:

- ✓ By Grace
- ✓ Through Faith

So the “means” by which we are saved is Grace, and the “means” through which we are saved is Faith. Now we discussed Faith last week- but please notice that the “origination”, or the “starting point”, or the “beginning” of Salvation is Grace and the “mechanism” that allows Salvation to work or that brings Salvation to pass is Faith. So the initial “object” that acts *first* is Grace- not our partaking of Sacraments, Grace- not our Baptism, Grace- not human decision, Grace- not human choice- just the Grace of God.

Now hold your finger on **Ephesians 2** because we’re going to come back to that in just a moment and turn with me to **John 3:1-7**.

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

6 "**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

7 "**Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**

So based on that- we see that we must be “born again” or we will not even see the Kingdom of God much less enter into it. And so as we go to Church today- we hear terms like:

- ✓ Born Again
- ✓ Saved
- ✓ Justified

... used all the time and we really don't know the difference between them, and so most of us just *assume* that they are simply *synonyms* to describe the same event. But that's not true.

Conception and Birth are the “means” by which people who don't exist are given life. And so being born again is the “giving of spiritual life” the *second* time- to people who have lost it. And you only “give spiritual life” to people who are spiritually dead. But how did we die-spiritually? The Bible says in **Genesis 2:16b&17** that God told Adam:

16 ... From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

... and Adam ate, and the very second that he and Eve ate of that fruit- they died *spiritually*. And at that moment- what Paul said over in **Ephesians 2** became true and all of humanity is fallen and lost, and

everybody who is lost exists **“in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind,** and we are **“by nature children of wrath”**. And as time went on- that *spiritual* death brought forth *physical* death as well. So it is true that everybody eventually dies *physically* because of sin- but it is also true that every human being is *already spiritually* dead- even before they are born- by virtue of the Fall.

And so if anybody is going to be saved- they must be given new spiritual life *first*, they must be born again *first- before* they are saved. Now most of us were taught something like this:

You must believe in order to be born again

... when in reality the Bible teaches that:

You must be born again so you can believe

... since dead people can't believe until they are resurrected. And so the sovereign giving of spiritual life must come *before* the individual is able to believe. And that means that the giving of life, or being born again, must *precede* or come before both repentance and faith.

Now the Theological term for being born again, or the acquiring of this new spiritual life, is “Regeneration”. So in your mind- you should think that being born again or being given new spiritual life or regeneration is the same thing. And being born again or regenerate or receiving this new spiritual life is what the OT Prophets were talking about when they said in the New Covenant- that God was going to come to the unworthy sinner and sovereignly give him eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe. And with those new ears- we can hear the Gospel, and with those new eyes we can perceive truth, and with that new heart we have both the desire and the power to repent of our sins and trust in Jesus and in His finished Work, and we are then justified.

But since we are spiritually dead to begin with- without a sovereign move of God the Holy Spirit- giving us that new spiritual life sovereignly- all by Himself- without you asking for it and without you cooperating with Him in receiving it, and even without you wanting it- nobody would ever be born again. And if nobody is born again- then they will not hear and they will not see and they will not believe. And if they do not hear and see and believe- nobody repents and nobody is

saved. And the men who wrote the Nicene Creed back in the 4th Century understood all this, and that is why they called God the Holy Spirit:

"The Lord- the Giver of Life"

So since we are spiritually dead as lost people, and since we do not naturally or normally love God as lost people, and since we have neither the power nor the inclination to even *desire* to love and serve God- if anyone is to be saved- God must sovereignly go to that lost sinner and *impose* His Will upon that lost soul *first*. God must sovereignly *insert* Himself into that person's life and sovereignly *interrupt* his plans and *disturb* his agenda and *violate* his will and stop him in order to give him this new spiritual life.

And that sovereign imposition, that sovereign insertion, that sovereign interruption, that sovereign disturbance, that sovereign violation, and stopping- is called "Grace".

So Grace is God sovereignly and actively doing for an unworthy sinner what that person patently does not deserve. So Grace is active- it is a "doing". Grace is not passive. So in the case of Salvation- Grace is God actively and sovereignly giving a person what that person doesn't want, and what that person hasn't sought for or asked for, and what that person doesn't appreciate at that time- so that person may be born again and so that person may be saved and so he will love and serve God and enjoy God in heaven forever. And as Zwingli found out 500 years ago- Grace is just as active and just as much a "doing" to the believer and for the believer *after* he is saved as it was before.

Now back to our passage in **Ephesians 2**. So we have found out that the origination of Salvation is Grace. And that is why Paul says here that Salvation is:

By Grace

And the way that Paul originally used the Greek language here- we see that he meant that Salvation was:

By Grace alone

So Salvation is *not* the result of us doing religious things. Paul said that Salvation was by Grace. And so the issue that the Reformers re-discovered 500 years ago was that Salvation is *not* the result of people bargaining with God. Salvation is not working hard to make yourself attractive to God. And that means that Salvation is not the result of you engaging in the Sacraments or of being baptized or following the Rite of Penance or participating in Lent.

But in our day- we must rise up and say that "*Sola Gratia*" also means that Salvation is not the result of human initiative like, "*You take the first step and God will take all the rest*", and a host of other thoughts and practices in our day that are just as unbiblical and just as made-up as the false teaching of the medieval church of Zwingli's day.

So we must take heed to ourselves and *continue* to affirm that Salvation is by Grace alone today. And that means that Salvation is *not* the result of human decision or from people walking an aisle or people shaking the preachers hand or because a lost sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins suddenly decided all on his own to choose to love and serve God. We must say that nobody "gives their hearts to God" and that nobody "accepts Jesus into their hearts" because Salvation is by Grace alone.

So, whether it is 500 years ago in Europe or today in Mississippi- we must boldly proclaim that because we have come out of ecclesiastical darkness into the Light of Divine Truth (Post Tennebras Lux), and because all of our doctrine comes from Scripture and Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura), that is why we proclaim loudly that Salvation is "by" Grace, and it is "by" Grace *alone* (*Sola Gratia*). And Salvation is "through" Faith, and it is "through" Faith alone (Sola Fide).

So the overarching claim about the meaning of Grace that I want to make today is this: Grace refers to the Truth that God, and God alone, is the decisive Cause at the bottom of our *election*, and our *new birth*, and our *justification*, and our *daily life* of faith and obedience.

And by using the word "decisive", I mean that no human influence- no human distinctive, no human willing, no human feeling, no human acting- absolutely nothing outside God, whatsoever- is at root- *decisive* in bringing about our election or causing our new birth or justifying the ungodly, or the daily life of faith and obedience.

So whatever role that human beings play in our own Salvation — from eternity past to eternity future — it is never, at the bottom,

decisive. Significant, yes. Meaningful, yes. Necessary, yes. But decisive-never. Only God is decisive. And this is part of what it means for God to be God and not Man.

So, at the bottom of our Election, at the bottom of our Regeneration, at the bottom of our Justification, and at the bottom of our daily life of faith and obedience in the process of Sanctification- the *decisive* Cause is *always* God, and it is always God *alone*, and it is never Man. And that is the *deepest* Truth about the Grace of God. God's Grace is absolutely "free", and, therefore, it *cannot* ever in any way be decisively determined by Man or any influence outside of God's Own Person and Will.

And this is the most fundamental meaning God's Grace. The decisive Cause of our election, regeneration, justification, and our daily life of faith and obedience — the single Cause that carries the day- the one Origination or Catalyst that is ultimately effective- the one that *cannot* be thwarted or defeated- is God, and God alone. So I want you to think about Grace in four ways:

Grace is at the bottom of our Election

Romans 11:5-7

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Romans 9:11-16

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

12 it was said to her, "*THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.*"

13 Just as it is written, "*JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.*"

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

15 For He says to Moses, "***I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.***"

16 So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

2 Timothy 1:9

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

... which I summarize like this: Before the creation of the world, God saw us in our sin and deadness — that is, in our great need for Grace — and God chose a people for Himself so that the decisive Cause might be clear; not our willing, but God's willing. So we conclude that Salvation depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, Who has mercy. And that means that election is by Grace alone.

Grace is at the Bottom of our *New* Birth

We were dead in sin when God saw us in election, needing grace. And we were dead in sin when the wind of His Spirit blew over us and made us live in regeneration.

Ephesians 2:5&6

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

Now why did Paul break off his sentence and insert "by grace you have been saved" at the end of verse 3, even though he is going to say that again in verse 8? The point is this: It is at *this* point in his discussion that the deepest meaning of Grace is made clear: "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ." STOP. Insert explanation: "by grace you have been saved." So dead men coming alive is Grace. And dead men do not provide the decisive Cause of their own life. They don't provide *any* cause of their

life – they only verify their existence in sin. But God does. And that is the meaning of Grace.

Grace is at the Bottom of our *Justification*

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? How shall guilty sinners stand before a holy Judge at the last day? They must be justified. They must be found to be just, to have righteousness. How will that be?

Titus 3:7

so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Here's how Paul says it in **Galatians 5:2–4**,

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

So it is either the whole law or no law- but Christ alone. So Salvation is either by works or it is by grace. So at the bottom of our justification is Grace- and grace alone. Not one millisecond of human effort can be added to the ground of our justification. So we are justified by Grace alone in Jesus Christ.

Grace is at the Bottom of our *Daily Life of Faith and Obedience* (Sanctification)

Shall we not strive to enter by the narrow gate now that we are saved? Shall we not pursue the holiness without which no one will see the Lord? Shall we not put to death the sinful deeds of the body? Yes, we shall; with all our might. And when we have done all our striving, what shall we say?

1Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Philippians 2:12&13

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Colossians 1:29

For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

So we must labor here on the Gulf Coast. Yes, we do. But just like our Election and just like our New Birth, and just like our Justification and our Sanctification- our Ministry here and every step we take in faith and obedience will be the decisive Work of God's free Grace.

God has called you and me not to value our lives but for one thing: to finish our race and the Ministry we received from the Lord Jesus to bear witness to the Gospel of the Grace of God. And this Grace gives us the firmest foundation for our Ministry and the best Message that this Gulf Coast could ever hear.

Therefore- no one on the Gulf Coast will be able to say, *"My sins are too great and too many for me to be elected by God,"* because human decision had no part at all in the decisive Cause of Election. It was by Grace Alone.

No one on the Gulf Coast will be able say, *"My sins are too great and too many, and my habits too deep for God to give new birth,"* because there are no degrees of deadness. Dead is dead. And new life is totally by Grace alone.

No one on the Gulf Coast will be able to say, *"I could never contribute enough to my righteousness for any judge to acquit me,"* because this Judge will not let you contribute anything to Christ's Righteousness. It is all His, and it is all by Grace alone.

And no one on the Gulf Coast will be able to say, *"I won't be able to live the Christian life. I am too weak and too defiled,"* because no one can live the Christian life. No one is the decisive Cause of his own obedience. We are what we are by the Grace of God. And Grace alone is decisive.

This is our Message. This is our life. To finish our course, and to bear witness to the Majesty and the Magnificence of the Grace of God! Sola Gratia!

Amen. Let's pray

© 2008- 2015 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1996 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.