

GRACE ALONE!

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

The rediscovery of the gospel truth of “Sola Gratia” or “Grace Alone” was not only a monumental event in the life of Martin Luther. The rediscovery of God’s sovereign grace in salvation also rescued the Christian Church from the corruption and errors related to the gospel of Christ. Prior to the Protestant Reformation in 1517, the biblical doctrine about salvation by grace alone was distorted and obscured by the erroneous teaching of salvation by grace plus earning merit with God through good works. Consequently, the sufficiency and finality of Christ’s work on the Cross to save sinners was also undermined. As we revisit what God’s Word teaches about the role of God’s grace in the salvation of His people, let’s consider these two foundational gospel truths.

1. We cannot be saved by _____.

If we would study all religions in this world, we would come up with two doctrines of salvation. One is salvation by human works; the other which is taught in the Bible, is salvation by divine grace. The Apostle Paul clearly teaches that our salvation “*is not a result of works, so that no one may boast*” (Eph. 2:9). Throughout history, men and women have tried to obtain salvation by human effort. There are those who place their confidence in self-righteousness through the observance of the law (Phil. 3:4-8; James 2:10). But as Romans 3:20 points out, “*For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*” Another form of human works employed by some to earn salvation is through religious piety. But as Isaiah 64:6 declares, our righteous and religious deeds are but polluted garments in God’s sight in light of His perfect holiness. There are also those who believe that they could be saved by their good works (Luke 18:9-14). But as Paul consistently affirms, our human sinfulness is so grave that no amount of good deeds or moral achievements could ever make us right with God (Eph. 2:1-3; Phil. 3:8).

2. We can only be saved by God’s _____.

God’s Word unambiguously teaches that our salvation is by God’s grace alone, that it is not our own doing and that it is God’s unmerited and free gift (Eph. 2:8). Our salvation entails being rescued from the danger of God’s eternal wrath upon sin and being delivered from the punishment of eternal separation from God and endless torment in hell (1 Thess. 5:9). The sole basis and only ground of our salvation is the grace of God. God’s grace is His generous, kind, and merciful disposition and character (Psalm 103:8-12). God’s grace is also His unmerited favor and His compassionate act of saving sinners who deserve nothing but His wrathful judgment and condemnation. God’s salvation should also be understood and received as His divine gift. In the words of Romans 3:23-25, we are “*justified by God’s grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.*” When God justifies us, God does not only forgive us of our sins. He also declares us perfectly righteous for Christ’s sake (Isa. 53:10; Matt.26:38; John 19:30; Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Titus 3:4-7; Rom. 8:1,33-34; 1 John 2:1).
