

# The Five Solas (2022): Sola Gratia

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[0:00] Please grab your copy of God's Word and turn to Ephesians chapter 2. I'm a guy, perhaps more than most, who really likes a plan.

! So, amongst many other, much better reasons, one of the reasons I really like verse-by-verse exposition.

One of the joys of being a pastor is sitting down and breaking down a book of God's Word into presentable portions.

I love building those outlines. I've got a spreadsheet with all the weeks planned out. From time to time, my plans get confounded, and we call an audible. Is that a good football? Okay.

It's fall, right? We call an audible. You can tell I'm not a football guy. And we do something different. So, this morning we're going to do something different, and I want you to understand why. We've only been in the book of Romans now for two weeks.

[1:10] The first week, we looked at verses 1 through 4 of Paul's salutation. And then last week had the intention of looking at verses 5 through 7.

I only made it through my very first point last week, and quickly realized, as we were looking at the time, I probably should wait on these last two points.

So, in this week, I was thankful to get to continue to develop a sermon for today. And I want you to be aware that there's even a little bit of groaning in me to not preach these last two verses there, verse 6 and 7 of Romans chapter 1, because I love this last little bit of this text.

Verse 6, and I'll tell you more about this in coming weeks, is especially precious to me, this phrase, you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

And so, I'm really eager to preach this text. And by God's grace, I have notes of preparation to preach this text.

[2:20] But two things are making me think about changing the direction that we go in and spending a little bit of time in Ephesians chapter 2. The first is that in 1517, on October 31st, the man known as Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the Wittenberg door and began what's called the Protestant Reformation.

I think it's good for those of us who claim to be Protestants to at least tip our hats to this time each year. More reasonably, you could say that the Reformation began the following year in 1518, but this moment is a day that can be marked as the beginning of said Reformation.

So that's coming up. We're thinking toward that October 31st. Next Lord's Day is October 30th. We want to stop and think a little bit together about that, why it is important and on whose shoulders we stand.

The other thing, as many of you may not know this about me, but I'm a type 1 diabetic. So if you ever see strange apparatus on me, I'm not carrying a pager.

I like some old school things, but not a pager. That's an insulin pump. I have a device that's constantly measuring my blood sugar, and I get to handily pull it out and look at it.

[3:46] If you see me from time to time looking at my phone, that's what I'm doing. And I really, really work at monitoring my blood sugar. I'm a pretty healthy diabetic. I've been a diabetic since I was 5.

I'm 42, almost 43 now. My endocrinologist likes me and applauds me. So typically, things are going well in that aspect of my life.

I really carefully monitor my blood sugar on Sunday mornings, trying not to get low, my blood sugar to get too low, because I get a little bit out of sorts and I can't think clearly. So I'm always very

cautious on Sunday mornings.

Yesterday, though, and I do not know why, beginning at about 5 p.m., I'm looking at my blood sugar just started skyrocketing. So at first I thought maybe my pump wasn't delivering insulin, but it seemed to be delivering insulin.

And over the past 5 p.m. to about 6 a.m., my blood sugar went up and it stayed up and it stayed up and it stayed up. And I've been up most of the night trying to monitor and deal with that. And I put so much insulin into my body, I can't even tell you how many units exactly.

[4:47] It went above 450. That tells you how high it got. And when a diabetic's blood sugar goes that high over a sustained amount of time, they feel terrible.

It's a difficult feeling to describe. I feel like I'm being squeezed all over. I can feel my heartbeat in every part of my body. Heart rate goes up.

You run the risk of going into something called diabetic ketoacidosis, which is real, real bad. You want to be at the hospital if that happens. So I'm telling you all that just to say, I don't feel good this morning.

I feel pretty crummy. And I've joked before. I think it's good for the church to be reminded that I'm just a man. But I'm only joking when I say that I know you all know that I'm just a man.

It's really probably more for my sake that I remember that I'm just a man and feeble and I'm finite and that that's OK. And that, you know, God in his power uses feeble and finite people to accomplish his will.

[5:51] So these two reasons, I just I want to preach this text at full energy. So coming soon, the conclusion of Romans chapter one, verses five through seven today, perhaps a slightly lower energy version of me.

I'd like to look at Ephesians chapter two, verses one through ten and consider the Reformation doctrine of sola gratia.

Sola gratia. That is the Latin for by grace alone or grace only. And the reformers loved the word only.

And the reformation and the study of it has a bearing on our lives because first, as I mentioned previously, it's our history. It's important for us to know the tradition from which we come.

And of course, we could argue that it traces out before that as well. But much of who we are as a people find some of its locus in these moments in history.

[7:01] But secondly, and more importantly, we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past as we're inclined to do. So there are five solas of the reformation in English.

I'll tell you what they are. The scriptures alone tell us that's number one, that our justification comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

And I have already argued to you that this is the theme of Paul's book to the Roman believers. The scriptures alone tell us our justification comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

Some would call these doctrines of grace. Our justification is our right standing before God, right? That which we do not have apart from the saving work of Christ. Left to ourselves, we are enemies of God. In order for us to stand before him, not only having the record of our sin canceled, but also having the righteousness required by the law is to be justified.

[8:23] And grace is God's unmerited favor. So we are justified by grace alone.

A modern evangelicals are repeating the mistakes of the past. Lord, have mercy on us that we don't do the same.

But before I make that modern evangelical case to you, allow me a moment to show you a bit of the historical thread of the error. At the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo found some occupation refuting the teaching of a man named Pelagius. Pelagius and the subsequent teaching known as Pelagianism denied original sin, believed in an autonomous and neutral free will.

We read a pretty powerful statement against that together earlier. The power of sin and the judgment for it have their cause in individual choice rather than inborn sinfulness.

[9:33] And people become sinners by following Adam's poor example. And they become holy by following Jesus's good example. You may hear the lack of grace alone.

Sola gratia in those assertions. Augustine carefully worked to refute Pelagius's teaching. We have record of the writing between them. And Pelagianism was condemned at the Council of Carthage. Although Pelagianism was still considered heresy in Luther's day, it was the doctrine largely being practiced. They condemned it in writing, but they practiced it.

And we'll talk more about this next week. Later, followers of the historic doctrines taught by John Calvin had to refute the widely followed teaching of a man named Joseph Arminius.

Fast forward a few centuries to the 19th century revivalist Charles Finney. Sadly, a man still celebrated in evangelicalism. Finney emphasized free will in the work of salvation and in the work of sanctification.

[10:47] He concluded that, quote, full present obedience is a condition of justification. So hear that he's saying a person must be perfect to be justified by themselves.

Perfect. He went on to say, quote, but again to the question, can man be justified while sin remains in him? Surely he cannot, either upon legal or gospel principles, unless the law be repealed.

But can he be pardoned and accepted and justified in the gospel sense while sin, any degree of sin remains in him? Certainly not. End quote. Dwight L. Moody, a 19th century evangelist, said, quote, God has cast his votes for your soul.

Satan has cast his vote. You have to cast the deciding vote. End quote. If that doesn't make you crumble, let's talk.

I want you to understand the heresy stated in those three sentences. Roger Olson is a modern theologian, an Armenian modern theologian, but he said this, which I agree with.

[12:01] So now I'm telling you, I agree with what he says here. He said, what is heard in most American evangelical pulpits today is semi-Pelagian at best, mostly Pelagianism.

So there's my kind of arc. It's a problem still today. I'm going to give you some examples in a survey conducted in 2009 at an evangelical conference. The question was asked, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

A simple binary question. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? And here was the statement without the scripture reference. None is righteous. No, not one.

No one understands. No one seeks for God. This is Romans three versus 10 and 11. At an evangelical conference. People who are Christ followers, right? A direct quote from the scripture.

Do you agree or disagree with this? Two thirds of those survey disagreed. Yeah. Yeah. Staggering. In another study, 86% of evangelicals agreed with the statement.

[13:10] Quote, God helps those who help themselves. 86%. 86%. And 65% of those people believe that the statement is found in the Bible.

We live in a day of moralistic, therapeutic deism, which goes like this. Do good so that you can feel good so that you can get good.

It's kind of a peddling of a soft prosperity gospel, right? Where you're not believing that you're going to have everything that you might want to own if you follow Jesus.

Right? But you are going to get to be complete and feel good if you do. Research has shown this idea of moralistic, therapeutic deism.

Research has shown that the more frequently an evangelical church is attended, the more likely this view is to be held. The more it's being taught is what that means.

[14:13] The more likely it is to be held. So, this doctrine, sola gratia, has a lot of bearing on today.

And I pray that we never lose sight of it. So, Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

That it was written for his glory and our good. And so, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises. And to obey its commands.

Paul writes to the Ephesian believers. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this world.

Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

[15:11] Carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind. And were by nature children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind. But God. Being rich in mercy.

Because of the great love with which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses.

Made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

And raised us up with him. And seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us.

In Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved. Through faith. And this. The faith. Is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Not a result of works. So that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works.

[16:12] Which God prepared beforehand. That we should walk. In them. So three points for our study this morning. As we consider the doctrine of sola gratia.

Found here in Ephesians chapter 2. Verses 1 through 10. First. The requirement. The requirement. Of grace. Second. The receipt.

Of grace. And third. The response. Of grace. First. The requirement of grace. Found in verses 1 through 3. We need God's unmerited favor.

Because we cannot earn God's favor. Verse 1 tells us that. If we are in Christ. We were. Past tense. Dead. In the trespasses. And sins. And that this was a. State of being. It wasn't something in degree. It was who we were.

[17:13] Note the continuing past tense language. In verses 2 and 3. In which you once walked. Among whom we all once lived. And Paul says we were.

By nature. Children. Of wrath. That's who we were. If we are now found. In Christ. If you're not in Christ. It's who you are.

We were. Spiritually dead. You were not spiritually alive. You were not sick. And in need of a doctor. Someone to administer. A pill of grace.

To you. A little help. Along. The way. You were not drowning. In the sea. And Jesus threw you. A life preserver. And all you had to do. Was reach out. And grab hold of it.

To be saved. It's a common. Analogy. Rather. You were a rotting corpse. At the bottom of the sea. And Jesus jumped in.

[18:11] Pulled your lifeless body. To the surface. And breathed. Life. Into you. You contribute. Nothing. To your salvation. But your sin.

Romans chapter 3. Beginning in verse 10. You're going to recognize the beginning of this. From previously. Paul says. None is righteous. No. Not one.

No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together. They have become worthless. No one does good. Not even.

One. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses.

And bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin. And misery. And the way of peace. They have not known. There is no fear of God.

[19:09] Before their eyes. In this extended quotation. Paul is pulling together. A myriad. Of old testament texts. To drive. His.

Point. Just hear it. He's quoting here. Paul was a Bible preacher. Psalm 14. 1-3. Psalm 53. 1-3. Psalm 5-9. Psalm 140.

Verse 3. Psalm 10-7. Proverbs 1-16. Proverbs 3. 15-17. Isaiah 59. 7-8. And Psalm 36. And verse 1. The Bible is replete. With this teaching. You cannot avoid it. If you're to be faithful. To the text.

Spiritually. Dead.

No one. No one. Not even. One. You are not enough. You need the saving work of Christ. Which is all of grace.

[20:05] I don't think you can muster up enough. To save yourself. It must be a work of grace. In your life. Saving grace is not like a cup of

coffee.

I can do a lot of things better in the morning. With a little coffee in me. Saving grace is God's favorable posture toward you. His unmerited favor.

Our salvation is all of God. We need it. And we need it entirely. In order for us to be saved.

Secondly.

Let's go on in the text. To look at the receipt of grace. Verses 4-9. How did we come to receive this grace? Verse 4 begins.

But. God. And I love these conjunctions. I have a really dear friend who does a Bible study that he calls the big butts of the Bible.

[21:07] Mostly teaches that to youth. But. He looks at these phrases. All of these phrases. And this to me is one of the most precious ones. But. God. He has said.

Here's who you are. And then he turns the attention. From who we were. Or are. Apart from Christ. And says. But God. Being rich in mercy.

Because of the great love with which he. Loved us. Did God love us. From some merit of our own. Paul is saying here.

Unequivocally. No. Do you not see. Who you were. And just to be sure. Anybody wants to come to verse 5.

And not read the preceding verses to it. He then says. Even. When we were dead. In our trespasses. That state. That he has just mentioned.

[22:04] Even when. We were dead. In our. Trespasses. God was. Rich toward us. In mercy. And he loved. Us. We were helpless.

Hopelessly lost. Without his. Intervention. And what does God's grace accomplish. In our lives. Spiritual life.

Spiritual life. He says in verse 5. He has. Made us. Alive. Together. With Christ. And this is not. A confusing. Text. Many times. When I. Go to the scripture. I want to get into the original languages. And think that somehow. Some. Amazing thing will be unlocked. As I look at the original. Language. This is a very good. English translation. Of this. Phrase. Right. And it. Places. The work. On God's shoulders. And completely.

[23:01] Takes it off. Of ours. He. Made us. Alive. Together. With Christ. By. Grace. You. Have. Been.

Saved. He. Changed us. Positionally. Right. Dead. Alive. He did it. He moved us. From that place. Once dead.

Now alive. And to further. Emphasize that. Paul states. In verse six. And raised us up with him. And seated us with him. In the heavenly places. In. Christ.

Jesus. Right. The glory. That is both ours. And will be ours. Forevermore. Why? I think that.

All Christians. Should ask that question. Why. Oh God. Such grace. To me. We did it. Because God. Wanted to show. Sinners.

[23:58] So set against him. In all. That they did. Unmerited. Favor. For the praise. Of his. Name. That he might put.

On display. His great. Love. Verse seven. So that in the coming ages. He might show. The immeasurable. Riches.

Of his grace. And kindness. Toward us. In Christ. Jesus. That he might put it on. Display for us. For by grace. You have been saved.

Through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift. Of God. Not. A result. Of works. So that no one. May. Boast. So that God.

Would be made. Much. Of. God's way. Of salvation. Leaves us. Without any room. For boasting. Except. In the cross. Of Christ.

[24:52] The means. By which. God's grace. Is made. Effectual. In our lives. I'd like to read to you. A longer bit of scripture. From the book of Isaiah. You may be well served.

Turning to this. Isaiah 43. Verses. One through seven. Or maybe. You'd be well served. By just. Listening. Isaiah writes.

But now. Thus. Says the Lord. He who created you. Oh. Jacob. He who formed you. Oh. Israel. Fear not.

For I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You. Are mine. When you pass through the waters. I will be with you. And through the rivers. They shall not.

Overwhelm you. When you walk through fire. You shall not be burned. And the flame. Shall not consume you. For I. Am the Lord. Your God. The Holy One of Israel.

[25:51] Your Savior. I give Egypt. As your ransom. Cush. And Seba. In exchange. For you. Because you are precious. In my eyes. And honored.

And I love you. I give men. In return. For you. Peoples. In exchange. For your life. Fear not. For I am with you. I will bring your offspring. From the east.

And from the west. I will gather you. I will say to the north. Give up. And to the south. Do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar. And my daughters.

From the end. Of the earth. Everyone who is called. By my name. Whom I created. For my. Glory. Whom I. Formed.

And made. If you are in Christ. He is speaking. Of you. Now I have a.

[26:47] Poem I'd like to read. And. I really want to find. Who to credit this poem to. I always seem to find. A source that it was in. But then they never sourced.

Who actually wrote it. So. If you. If you happen to know. Please. Please come let me know. But I'll just say. An anonymous. Author. Wrote this. Oh long.

And dark. The stairs I trod. With stumbling feet. To find. My God. Gaining a foothold. Bit by bit. Then slipping back.

And losing it. Never progressing. Striving still. With weakening grasp. And fainting will. Bleeding to climb. To God. While he. Serenely smiled.

Unnoting me. Then came a time. When I. Loosened. My hold. And fell. Thereby. Down to the lowest. Set my fall. As if I had not climbed.

[27:43] At all. And while I lay. Despairing there. I heard a footfall. On the stair. In the same path. Where I.

Dismayed. Faltered and fell. And lay. Afraid. And low. When hope. Had ceased to be. My God. Came down the stairs. To me. Third point. The response. To grace. Found in verse 10.

Paul writes. For we are. His workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. For good works. Which God. Prepared. Beforehand.

That we should walk in them. I will never. Go tired. Of saying. Our good works. Are the evidence. That we are saved. By grace. And those works.

[28:39] Are all of grace. We are not accepted. Because of our works. But being accepted. We work. It's a response. To the grace of God.

In our lives. We must note. First. From verse 9. That our response. To grace. Excludes. Boasting. So that no one. May boast.

Many people. Functionally. Ruin. A beautiful truth. That we are saved. By grace. Alone. By boasting. In the knowledge. That we are saved. By grace.

Alone. What a deceptive thing. We don't use. Such precious. Doctrinal knowledge. To see people. Humbled. Saved. And comforted.

But rather. To make them. Feel small. And us. Big. And this is not. The way of. Love. Jesus said.

[29:35] In John. Chapter 13. Verse 34. And following. A new. Commandment. I give to you. That you love. One another. Just as I have loved. You.

You also are to love. One another. By this. All people will know. That you are my disciples. If you have. Love. For one another. Praise be to God.

For doctrinal. Accuracy. We must know. The God of the Bible. In order to properly worship. The God. Of the Bible. But too often.

To our shame. We take what we. Know. What's been revealed. To us. By our God. And use it as a. Reason for pride. And for. Boasting.

It ought to be. All together. Humbling. We ought to be. Heartbroken. For those. Who have yet. To understand. The great. Kindness. Mercy.

[30:33] Of our God. Our hearts. Ought to go. Out to them. In order that. They might be. Brought. In. So God. Has given to us. This.

Charge. And this. Task. Right. That we would. Having been loved. Turn and. Love. Others. And I'm not talking about some.

Mealy. Feely. Kind of. Love. Please don't hear me saying. That at all. Right. Love is not a feeling. Love is an action. That seeks the highest good. Of others.

Right. That speaks. With boldness. That people might come to faith. In Christ. John chapter 14. Paul goes on.

Or Jesus goes on. After. The text. I just read you. In John 13. To say. If you love me. You will keep. My. Commandments. He just commanded.

[31:28] That we would love. Others. And John writes. In first. John chapter 4. Verse 19. And following. We love. Because he first. Loved.

Us. If anyone says. I love God. And hates his brother. He's a liar. For he who does not. Love his brother. Whom he has seen. Cannot love God.

Whom he has not seen. So verse 10. Tells us. That. We are created. In Christ Jesus. For good works. Which God. Prepared. Before him.

And they are. Many. Right. There are so. Many. Good works. That God has prepared. For each and every. One of us. Let's just not. Lose sight.

That the. Impetus. For that. The reason. In which we go. And do good works. Is because. We. Have. Been. Loved. And therefore. Are to go. And to love.

[32:26] Charles Spurgeon. Once wrote. Of this. Text. I just read. In first. John. Chapter 4. Put the two. Truths. Together. That the love.

Of God. Is first. And that the love. Of God. Is the cause. Of our love. And I think. You will be. Inclined. Henceforth. To be believers. In what are.

Commonly called. The doctrines. Of grace. It is the. Scripture alone. That teaches us. That we are justified.

By grace alone. Through faith alone. In Christ alone. To the glory of God. Alone. Let us pray together.