

Main Idea: In Titus 2:11-14, we learn three reasons why Sola Gratia is essential for the Christian life.

- I. We begin the Christian life by grace alone (11).
  - A. The source of grace is God.
  - B. The result of grace is salvation.
  - C. The revelation of grace is mandatory.
  - D. The beneficiaries of grace are diverse.
- II. We live the Christian life by grace alone (12).
  - A. Grace teaches us to deny.
    1. Ungodliness must go.
    2. Worldly desires must go.
  - B. Grace teaches us to develop.
    1. Am I exhibiting self-control?
    2. Am I exhibiting righteousness?
    3. Am I exhibiting godliness?
- III. We finish the Christian life by grace alone (13-14).
  - A. We are expecting an event.
  - B. We are expecting a Person.
    1. He gave His life for us.
    2. He wants us to live our lives for Him.

Make It Personal: When you affirm sola gratia...

1. It changes the way you view yourself.
2. It changes the way you view others.
3. It changes the way you view God.

#### *Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11-14*

“I have found that the vast majority of people who call themselves Protestants have no idea what they are protesting,” writes R. C. Sproul in his book *Are We Together?* “If I ask them, ‘Why are you Protestant rather than Roman Catholic?’ they will say, ‘Well, I don’t believe I need to confess my sins to a priest,’ or, ‘I don’t believe the pope is infallible,’ or, ‘I don’t believe in the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven,’ or something of that sort. These are not inconsequential matters, of course, but they do not get to the heart of the reason why Protestants separated from the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>2</sup>

Could you answer the question? We are a Protestant church. What are we protesting?

The answer takes us back 500 years to October 1517 when Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg. He was protesting something happening in the Roman Catholic Church, of which he was a part and in fact a monk and professor of theology.

The core issue had to do with *how a sinner finds salvation in Christ*. The Roman Catholic Church taught, and still teaches, that “justification takes place primarily through the use of the sacraments, beginning with the sacrament of baptism.”<sup>3</sup>

I think sometimes Protestants misrepresent Catholics. Listen to Sproul again, “If you ask a Protestant the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, the Protestant will typically say: ‘We believe that justification is by faith but Roman Catholics say it is by works. We believe it is by grace but Roman Catholics say it is by

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a message preached in a series on “Grace” at WBC in 2009..

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Are We Together?*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> See R. C. Sproul, *Are We Together?*, p. 30.

merit. We believe it is through Christ but Roman Catholics say it is through one's own righteousness."

"These are terrible slanders against Rome," says Sproul. "From the sixteenth century to today, the Roman Catholic Church has said that justification requires faith, the grace of God, and the work of Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

That sounds like what we believe. Faith. Grace. The work of Christ. That's how a sinner is justified by God. Yes, it sounds similar... until you add one word.

*Alone.*

How does a sinner find salvation in Christ? Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the other reformers said, "God justifies the sinner by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, in Christ *alone*." The Roman Catholic Church responded to the protest saying, "Justification requires faith *plus* works, grace *plus* merit, Christ *plus* inherent righteousness."

"It was those pluses," says Sproul, "that became so problematic in the sixteenth century."<sup>5</sup>

So what are we Protestants protesting? It boils down to which word you choose. *Alone*. Or *plus*. We say *alone*. Rome says *plus*.

Does it really matter? My friend, what's at stake is heaven and hell.

*Sola* is the Latin word for *alone*. The reformers staked their lives on five solas. God's salvation is *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (through faith alone), *solo Christo* (in Christ alone), *sola Scriptura* (according to the Scriptures alone), *solus deo Gloria* (to the glory of God alone).

And how did the Roman Catholic Church respond to their protest? At the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the Church declared, "If anyone saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified...that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification...let him be anathema."<sup>6</sup>

Anathema means cursed, excommunicated, damned.

At Trent the Church explained its position. Yes, faith is a necessary condition for salvation, for faith is the beginning of justification, the foundation for justification, and the root of justification. But the Council also concluded that a person can have true faith and still *not* be justified because justification is accomplished *through the seven sacraments*.

Or to put it another way, Roman Catholic doctrine insisted that justification depends on a person's sanctification.<sup>7</sup>

Four percent of the population in our county and in Wheelersburg identify themselves as Catholic. I have friends who are Roman Catholic, as do most of you. And that's a good thing. We have many things in common. We love our kids. We love our schools. We love our country. We believe in the God of the Bible. We believe we are sinners. We believe in heaven, and hell.

But here is where we differ. How does a person get to heaven? We say it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Roman Catholic Church says if you believe that you are anathema.

You say, "My Catholic friends don't believe that."

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<sup>4</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Are We Together?*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Sproul, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Sproul, pages 91-2.

<sup>7</sup> I'm indebted again to R. C. Sproul's explanation; see *Ibid*, page 2.

That may be the case, but if so, it's because our friends do not believe what their church believes and insists they must believe if they want to go to heaven. Just encourage them to read their own church's authoritative statements.

Better yet, invite them to do what we are doing. Search the Scriptures to see what God has said. This morning we're going to see what He says about grace.

We are utterly dependent upon the grace of God. Grace means God's unmerited favor. In the Old Testament, you will find the word "grace" 39 times (in the KJV)—the more prevalent term used is *loving-kindness* (from the Hebrew *chesed*). The New Testament is full of grace. The word appears 131 times. Paul used the term to introduce and conclude nearly every letter he wrote.

For instance, in his introduction to Titus Paul writes, "*Grace* and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior (1:4)," and his conclusion echoes the same theme, "*Grace* be with you all (3:15)." Indeed, the final verse of the Bible says we need grace (Rev. 22:21). Yes, we need grace!

Few would argue the fact. It's kind of like saying, "We need air to live." We know it's true, but when was the last time you acknowledged your need for air?

"How much do we need grace?" is the question before us. Do we need grace *plus*, or grace *alone*?

We could turn many places in God's Word to answer that question, but I have chosen Titus 2:11-14. In Titus 2:11-14, we learn three reasons why *Sola Gratia* is essential for the Christian life.

### I. We begin the Christian life by grace alone (11).

The book of Titus bears its name because a man named Titus received it from his mentor, Paul. It was somewhere between the years A.D. 63 and 65, and Titus was serving on the island of Crete, the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. There was a young church on the island, a *very* young church. Paul and Titus had introduced Christianity to the Cretans, but soon afterwards Paul moved on and left Titus to do the mop-up work of organizing the church.

It was no easy task for Titus. Crete had a reputation (and it wasn't good). The inhabitants were known for their dishonesty, gluttony, and laziness (1:12). It was Titus's task to put things in order in the church, and Paul told him how in this epistle.

Notice 1:5, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished." The young church needed help, and in this letter Paul told Titus exactly what they needed. According to chapter one, they needed godly leaders. According to chapter two, they needed godly members. And according to chapter three, they needed a godly reputation in the community. It was Titus's job to make it happen.

How? To initiate the changes, Titus needed to teach the Word of God. The immediate context of our study is chapter two. There Paul tells Titus to teach the people how to live out their faith. "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine (1)."

Then in the following verses Paul identified five groups within the church that needed instruction. He was to teach the older men (2), and the older women (3), who in turn would teach the younger women (4-5). He was to teach the young men (6-8) and the slaves (9-10), with this aim in mind: "so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

That's key. It was Titus's job to teach the Cretan Christians how to live in such a way as to make the gospel of Christ attractive.

I know of nothing that does greater harm to the gospel than people who *profess* Christ but don't *live for* Christ.

I talked to a missionary some time ago who shared the following tragic story. A team of American missionaries was working in Africa, but lacked unity. The team was fractured by unresolved conflicts, strife, and bitterness. It had gone on for years, and was so bad that one of the African, national pastors came to my friend and said, "You missionaries are hurting the reputation of our church. We can't be around you."

To profess Christ and not be Christlike stifles the gospel. On the other hand, when a group of people choose to truly live for Christ, they can turn a community upside down!

Titus 2:1-10 shows us how to do it—through practical, Bible teaching. Titus 2:11-14 shows us what makes it possible. It's *grace*. Verse 11, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

Why do we affirm sola gratia? First, we begin the Christian life by grace alone. Notice four insights about grace from verse 11.

**A. The source of grace is God.** "For the grace of God." Grace begins with God, not with man. He's the God of grace. In fact, 1 Peter 5:10 calls Him the God of *all* grace.

**B. The result of grace is salvation.** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Paul can't think of salvation apart from the grace of God. No one is a Christian because he deserves it. No one. There are no "good catches" in God's sight, only sinners. All are saved the same way--by *grace*. It's the grace of God that brings salvation.

Just what is grace? Guthrie says, "Grace is God's free favor in dealing with man's sin." Wiersbe suggests, "Grace is God's lavish favor on undeserving sinners."

**C. The revelation of grace is mandatory.** "For the grace of God that brings salvation *has appeared* to all men." Notice something special about grace. Grace is unknown apart from God's revelation.

According to Romans 1, an unregenerate person can look at the stars and know that God exists. From creation, he can perceive the *power* of God. But he knows nothing of the *grace* of God. The natural man is blinded by sin and is oblivious to the grace and love of God. You need special revelation to grasp grace. Which is exactly what God gave.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has *appeared*." Sinners don't discover salvation. Rather, God's salvation has "appeared." The Greek term is *epiphany*. Paul's using a light metaphor. He's saying that just like a sudden ray of light breaks the blackness of night when the sun appears in the morning dawn, so the grace of God in its brilliance has penetrated the blackness of a sin-infested world.

When did this revelation of grace appear? John 1:14 tells us, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of *grace* and truth." Grace appeared when the Son appeared!

To whom has grace appeared? Insight #4...

**D. The beneficiaries of grace are diverse.** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared *to all men*." What does Paul mean by "all men"? Remember the context. In chapter two, Paul has just dealt with five categories of people (older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves). Who needs God's grace? The answer is, *all* types of people do. Male or female, old or young, rich or poor—*all* are guilty before God. And from *all* types of backgrounds God gathers His people.

I hope you realize (and appreciate) that there is great diversity in the Church of Jesus Christ. One day when we gather around the throne of God to worship the Lamb there will be people from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev 5:9). God doesn't call people on the basis of skin color or gender or economic status. No, the basis of His call is *grace*.

Oh beloved, ponder the grace of God! You wouldn't be a Christian today were it not for the grace of God. We need grace to begin the Christian life. God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. The Bible says we are *called* by God's grace (Gal. 1:6). We are *regenerated* by God's grace (Tit. 3:4-5). We are *forgiven* by God's grace (Eph. 1:7). We are *justified* by God's grace (Tit. 3:7; Rom 3:24).

We are indebted to grace. Listen to Paul's admission in 2 Timothy 1:9-10, "[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and *grace*. This *grace* was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus."

Okay, so what were the reformers protesting? How does the Roman Catholic Church say a person receives grace? Again, R. C. Sproul gives a helpful explanation.

It starts with the sacrament of baptism, by which a person receives justifying grace. He keeps the grace until he commits a "mortal" sin. It's called mortal because it kills the grace of justification. When that happens, the sinner must be justified a second time, through the sacrament of penance, where more grace is received. Still more grace is received through the sacraments of confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and extreme unction which is a final anointing of grace administered by the priest to a dying person lest he leave this world with mortal sin in his life and end up in hell.<sup>8</sup>

But the core difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics has to do with the other two "means of grace", or sacraments, penance and the Lord's Supper.

"This is the eye of the hurricane," says Sproul. "These are the real issues that divide Rome from Protestants."<sup>9</sup>

"One makes shipwreck of his soul by committing mortal sin, which destroys the grace of justification. However, the person can be restored to justification through penance."

This means he must make confession to the priest and then do certain "works of satisfaction." These may be small works (such as saying five "Hail Marys" or three "Our Fathers"), giving alms, or if the person's sins are severe, making a pilgrimage.

Here's where Luther's 95 theses come in to play. Luther was protesting the "sale of indulgences." An indulgence was a transfer of merit.

Sproul explains, "To gain heaven, a person must have sufficient merit. If a person dies lacking in sufficient merit to go directly to heaven, he goes to purgatory, the purging place. Purgatory is not hell; it is the place where a person receives loving and sanctifying chastisement. By this chastisement, the person is made righteous enough to enter heaven; in other words, he accrues enough merit to get into heaven. A person might spend five minutes in purgatory or he might spend thousands of years there, depending on the deficiency of merit with which he enters purgatory."<sup>10</sup>

But Rome took this a step further. The Church came to believe it had the power to give merit to those who lacked it. This merit came from those who had a surplus of good works, such as someone who became a martyr. These excess merits went into a treasury of merit that the Church could tap into to shorten someone's time in purgatory.

So in 1517 Pope Leo X offered indulgences to anyone who gave alms to help fund the building project for St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Johann Tetzel began selling these indulgences. That's when Martin Luther drove the nail in the church door, to protest this selling of grace, as it were.

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<sup>8</sup> Sproul, pages 70-71.

<sup>9</sup> Sproul, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> Sproul, p. 75.

So how does a person receive grace for salvation? That's the question. The Roman Catholic Church said a person receives grace through the sacraments. The Protestants, citing the Bible, said, it is by faith alone in Christ alone.

We begin the Christian life by grace alone. We will never appreciate our salvation fully until we grasp this. As Haldor Lillenas did, who wrote:

*Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin;  
How shall my tongue describe it, where shall its praise begin?  
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free,  
for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.*

We begin the Christian life by grace alone. But it doesn't stop there.

## II. We live the Christian life by grace alone (12).

The KJV ends verse 11 with a comma, and shows the close connection between verses 11 and 12. In fact, in verse 12 Paul bridges grace from the past to the present, and uses a Greek participle to show us what grace does. Grace *teaches* us. Yes, grace transforms us (that's verse 11), but grace also teaches us (verse 12).

Here we see the tie between theology and ethics, between what a person *believes* and how a person *behaves*. Why did Paul want Titus to teach the older men and women, the younger men and women, and the slaves how to live godly lives? Because grace demands it! And grace enables it! Grace is a *teacher*.

Don't miss this. The basis of ethics is doctrine. If you want to be a strong Christian, you don't need a church that will make you "feel good" on Sunday. You need a church where you can learn sound doctrine.

The Greek word for "teach" in verse 12 is a term that means "to train" (*paideuo*). It was used of training children, and in Hebrews 12:6-7 carries the idea of family discipline.

Parents, how do you teach your children? Probably, a little at a time. Step by step. I remember when our girls were learning to walk. They learned to take one step at a time.

Grace is a great teacher. It's a much better teacher than the Law. The Law says, "Do this! Don't do that!" No, grace is not anti-Law, and it certainly doesn't give a person a license to live however they want.

In fact, herein lies a primary difference between grace and law. Grace changes a person's *want to*. When we've been taught by grace, we *want to* live differently. When grace teaches, it gives incentive.

When I was a ten year old boy, my mother had a great method to get me to comb my hair and wash my face. She *told* me to! And I knew there would be consequences if I disobeyed her.

But a few years later she didn't have to tell me any more. The desire to please a special young lady in my life was all the incentive I needed to get cleaned up!

That's the difference between Law and grace. Law tells me to get cleaned up. Grace gives me the desire to do so.

Yes, grace is a great teacher. It trains us how to live in the present. What curriculum does grace use in the teaching process? Or simply put, what do we learn from grace? Grace informs us of two responsibilities, one negative, and the other positive.

**A. Grace teaches us to deny.** "It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions." Grace calls us to deny. William Hendriksen put it this way (371), "No one *sleeps* his way into heaven." Grace calls us to get rid of two things. What are they?

1. *Ungodliness must go.* Ungodliness is whatever is unlike God. Whatever is unattractive to God should have no place in our lives. Grace tells us to say no to it.

2. *Worldly desires must go.* Worldly passions, worldly lusts--these must go. But what are they? Chrysostom said that worldly things are things which do not pass over with us into heaven but are dissolved together with this present world. A man is a fool if he pours his life into that which is doomed to destruction. Barclay gives a good definition of "worldly things"--they are things we could not show to God.

Is there anything in your life you would be embarrassed to show God? Grace says get rid of it *now*. It may be an attitude—like bitterness. It may be a habit—like stretching the truth or consuming alcohol. It may be your unwholesome music tastes. It may be a vile TV show. Get rid of it.

You say, "That's legalism." No, it's what grace teaches us. Grace tells us to deny. Grace teaches us to *say no*.

Answer this. When was the last time you consciously *said no* to ungodliness and worldly passions? When was the last time you turned off a television program or stopped listening to a song or refused to go somewhere with your peers in order to *say no* to ungodliness and worldly passions?

If we're listening to grace, we ought to be continually *saying no*. Why? Because we're in a battle.

The apostle John gave counsel similar to Paul's in 1 John 2:15-16. "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world."

Every day we must *say no* to ungodliness and worldly desires. Because Christ saved us, we couldn't say no—we were enslaved to sin. But now we must. Grace teaches us to *deny* ungodliness and worldly passions.

But there are two sides to godly living. God's admonition in Isaiah 1:16-17 is, "Cease to do evil; learn to do good." Grace tells us to deny, that's side one. Here's side two...

**B. Grace teaches us to develop.** "It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, *and* to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age." In Ephesians 4, Paul puts it a different way when he tells us to "put off the old man" and "put on the new man."

Grace involves a negative assignment--*deny*. And grace involves a positive task--*develop*. The Christian life is an ongoing process of growth (the biblical term is "sanctification"). We haven't arrived.

"What are we to develop?" you ask. According to verse 12, we are to be growing in Christlikeness in three areas. The text says we should live *self-controlled* [*soberly* in the KJV; that deals with the believer's relationship with himself], *righteous* [that deals with the believer's relationships with other people], and *godly* lives [that deals with the Christian's relationship to the Lord].

These three virtues should be priority to us, and they will be if we're listening to grace. We'll want to live self-controlled, righteous, and godly lives.

How can we tell if we are developing? Let's make it personal. Ask yourself three questions.

1. *Am I exhibiting self-control?* Before we came to know Christ, we demonstrated self-indulgence, not self-control. And even if we were highly self-disciplined (which some non-Christians are), it was to me *us* look good, not Christ.

Do you control your passions, or do your passions control you? Young people, do you have healthy relationships with the opposite sex? Don't buy the notion of "safe sex". Our culture assumes young people will have sex before marriage. Even so-called

“professionals” are convinced that you can't expect a warm-blooded teen with active hormones to remain pure, so they offer the alternative of "safe sex."

This is an insult to the God of grace. The fruit of the Spirit of God is *self-control*. So yes, you and I *can* live a pure life, by God's grace.

2. *Am I exhibiting righteousness?* Verse 12 says, "And to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives." Would the people who know you well describe you as righteous (not *self-righteous*)? Are you a person who strives to do what is *right*? Are you a man or woman of integrity at work or at school? On the cross Christ broke the power of sin and gave us the merit of His righteous life. If we know Him, we can live upright lives.

3. *Am I exhibiting godliness?* Can people tell that God is living in you by looking at your life? Again, we don't *arrive* this side of glory. But are you growing?

Grace teaches us that we need to grow. Grace tells us where we need to go. And grace takes us there. Peter writes, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)."

Know this, Christian. *You can grow*. The Christian life will work *for you*. We begin the Christian life, and then we live the Christian life *by grace alone*.

### III. We finish the Christian life by grace alone (13-14).

I was a runner in High School. My favorite part of the race was the finish line. In Cross Country, the finish line was a funnel-shaped shoot that allowed runners to pass through only one at a time.

The Christian life is a unique race. There is not just one winner. Everyone contestant *may* win. All may win, however, not all *will* win. To be a winner in the Christian life, you must finish well. There's no prize for starting well.

Howard Hendricks shares these results from his personal study. There are 2,900 people mentioned in the Bible. Of these, the Bible gives us enough data concerning 100 to see if they finished well. Hendricks concludes, "Of these 100 Bible characters, only one-third finished well." I would propose the percentages aren't much different in the church today.

The Southern Baptists did a survey awhile back and came up with an alarming statistic. 116 pastoral couples are leaving the ministry in the SBC *every week*--for a variety of reasons (such as stress and moral failure). They started well, but for one reason or another, they didn't finish well.

But pastors aren't the only ones who throw in the towel. When it comes to marriage these days, many are not finishing well. You know the statistics. And in the area of church commitment, many are not finishing well. Their feelings get hurt, and they slip out the back door in search of greener pastures.

What does it take to finish well? In simple terms, the answer is *grace*. We need grace to finish the Christian life. And here's the great part. What we need, God freely provides.

Notice verses 13-14, "While we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

Grace teaches us to live with anticipation, with expectation. We are expecting something according to verse 13, actually two things that happen simultaneously.



**A. We are expecting an event.** What event? Paul calls it the "blessed hope." What is the blessed hope? It's not the blessed *hope-so*. It's not an event we *hope* will happen, but may not. It's an event we *know* will happen, on the authority of God's Word.

**B. We are expecting a Person.** We are awaiting "the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." People who finish well are people who live in constant expectation of Jesus' return.

Do you see the connection between verses 12 and 13? Why is it important how we live in the present? Why should we be motivated to live self-controlled, righteous, and godly lives in this present age? It's because we're expecting an event—the blessed hope—and a person. Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, is coming again!

Having mentioned the person of Christ, Paul can't miss an opportunity to reflect on the atonement which he does in verse 14. We need to remember two things about the Person we're going to see.

1. *He gave His life for us.* The first five words of verse 14 sum up the gospel, "Who gave Himself for us." Christ died as a substitute in our place.

But why? Why would the spotless Lamb of God give His life for wretched sinners like us? There's only one answer. It's *grace*. Unmerited favor. God rescues sinners not on the basis of what they will do, but on the basis of what His Son did.

And when His Son gave His life for us, He had a purpose in mind.

2. *He wants us to live our lives for Him.* Notice verse 14 again, "[Jesus] gave himself for us [here's the purpose] to redeem us from all wickedness and [here's the second purpose clause] to purify for himself a people that are his very own."

So grace alone means you can live however you want, works don't matter? No. Christ didn't give Himself for us merely so we could keep living the way we were living and still go to heaven. He gave Himself to redeem and purify a people *for Himself*, a people that are *His very own*.

Those are key words. Do you need incentive for holy living? Here it is. We are His, beloved. We exist for Him, not Him for us. He redeemed us so we would be eager to do what is good.

Notice the order. Good works follow grace like a caboose follows an engine. Good works don't merit grace, but are the consequence of it.

It's mind-boggling to think that Christ would give His life for us. It's just as mind-boggling to realize that He—the One who needs nothing—wants us to live our lives for Him. He's on our side. He wants us to finish well, and He gave us His own resources so we could. Do you know what that is? That's *grace*.

We begin the Christian life by grace alone. We live the Christian life by grace alone. And we finish the Christian life by grace alone. *Sola gratia*.

#### Make It Personal: When you affirm *sola gratia*...

1. *It changes the way you view yourself.* Many who call themselves Protestant hold to false theology and don't realize it. We know the Christian life began by grace--we were saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). And we know the Christian life ends by grace--we will be glorified by grace. But we think the Christian life is a bunch of works *we* do. Work, work, work. We think the present Christian life is up to us, depends on us, and earns merit with God.

Not so. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, for without Me you can do nothing."

Grace is the basis of the entire Christian life--past, present, and future. God chose us and saved us by His grace alone in the past. He will glorify us by His grace alone in the

future when Christ returns. And He expects us to live by His grace alone now in the present. It's all of grace.

So there's no room for pride in the Christian life. If you have the attitude, "I'm a pretty good Christian. I've got my life in order. Look what I've done..." then you don't understand grace. When you see yourself as dependent upon grace, it changes the way you view yourself.

2. *It changes the way you view others.* Others need grace, too, just like you. What are you doing to share the grace of God with others? Listen to what Paul said in Acts 20:24, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the *gospel of God's grace.*"

3. *It changes the way you view God.* He is the God of grace! So call on Him today, for salvation, for grace to live and serve Him. And make the words of the hymnwriter, Robert Robinson, your own:

*O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.*