

Series: 5 Solas of the Reformation

Sermon: Sola Gratia. Sola Fide.

(Grace alone. Faith alone.)

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10 ESV

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

Pastor S.C. Brown

We are beginning today a series of messages on the Protestant Reformation.

This year is the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. It was October 31, 1517 that a man named Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg, Germany.

This wasn't the beginning of the reformation but was certainly it's pivotal point, so we celebrate it as the beginning.

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church is a Protestant church, which comes out of the Protestant Reformation.

Well, what does that mean?

The root words there are 'Protest' and 'Reform'.

Protesting against what?

Trying to *Reform* what?

Protesting against abuses in the church during the middle ages, sometimes called the Dark Ages.

Trying to Reform the Roman Catholic church.

That reform was unsuccessful.

So, there became many groups of churches which you know today; Lutherans, Church of England or Anglican, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and etc.

These are all protestants.

Out of this Protestant Reformation came a rediscovery of certain doctrines from scripture that helped the church regain its footing and also changed the world forever.

They are referred to as the 5 Solas.
Sola means 'alone or only'.

The 5 Solas are:

Sola Gratia- Grace alone.

Sola Fide- Faith alone.

Solus Christus- Christ alone.

Sola Scriptura- Scripture alone.

Soli Deo Gloria- God's glory alone.

In order for us to understand why these responses were needed, let me tell you what was going on during this time period in the Roman Catholic Church.

The priests were very rich and the common people were poor.

Many priests were given positions based on guanxi and not because they were qualified.

Many priests didn't even know the Bible at all.
Many priests lived immoral lifestyles.

There weren't church services so to speak but just mass.

No preaching.
No congregational singing.
Just a choir and a formal service in Latin.

The common people didn't understand Latin, so the common man didn't know the Bible..nor could he.

This was a big problem.

When people don't know the Bible, all kinds of things happen.

Martin Luther translated the Bible into the local language of German and many other languages followed.

Gutenberg's developed the printing press at the same time....and things really took off.

The Reformation was a Bible movement.

Another big problem were these things called Indulgences.

They were grants that were sold by the church to buy people out of purgatory.

There were many problems in theology.

The theology of late Medieval Roman Catholicism was fundamentally and essentially at odds with Biblical theology.

The question the Reformers dealt with is this.....

How can a sinner be made right with a holy God? Or in Bible terminology we would ask, “How is a person Justified?”

The Roman Catholic church said....

A person is given the grace of God during water baptism at birth and a person needs to cooperate with God by doing good works in order to *keep* the grace of God.

If a person sins, they are to confess to a priest and then do penance, which a priest would require some act for them to get back in favor with God.

To put it simply....

A person needs Grace + merit= Justification
A person needs Faith + works = Justification

The catholic view said, Man has something to *contribute* and must *cooperate* with God in some way.

There is something God must do and there is something a person must do in order to be saved.

Does man contribute to his salvation OR is he saved by GRACE ALONE?

Let's turn in our Bibles to Ephesians 2.

2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 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— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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 coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is

not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not 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, that we should walk in them.

Notice the state of man according to the word of God in Ephesians.

- **DEAD** in the trespasses and sins
- Following the course of the world
- Following the prince of the power of the air
- Living in the passions of our flesh
- Carrying out the desires of the body and mind
- By nature children of wrath (not meaning we were angry people but that God's wrath is upon us)

This is the state of man.

Dead spiritually.

Not struggling spiritually.

Not distant but disconnected.

Not sick. Dead.

What do dead people contribute?

Certainly, those two words at the beginning of verse 4 are the sweetest 2 words in the Bible.

BUT GOD!

BUT GOD!

-God who is rich in mercy!

-Because of his great love!

What did he do?

While we were dead he **made us alive.**

He raised us up....from the dead.

Seated us with him in the heavenlies...gave us a place in his Son's kingdom....Adopted us into his family.

By his mercy.

Because of his great love.

By his grace.

Notice that 3 times it mentions his grace.

1. verse 5- by grace you have been saved.
2. verse 6- to show the immeasurable riches of his grace.
3. verse 8- by grace you have been saved through faith.

It's not your own doing.

It's a gift.

What's a gift?

Grace and faith.

Salvation comes as a result of his grace.

Salvation comes through the means of faith, that he gives us.

No one may boast and say, "I did it."

Did Jesus make you a better person or did Jesus make you alive?

Did Jesus heal your sicknesses or did Jesus raise you from the dead?

Look at some other verses in scripture:

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let me give you 2 illustrations.

1. You are in the sea. You're struggling to stay afloat. Any minute now you will drown. You are going to die if help doesn't come. Jesus sees you. By his grace, Jesus comes quickly to you in a boat with a life preserver. He yells to you, "Grab ahold of the life preserver. I will save you. All you need to do is grab ahold." Just as you are going down, you reach out by faith and feel the rope. You grab it. Jesus pulls you into the boat. You are rescued. You are saved from perishing.
2. You were swimming and you drowned. You are dead. Your body is floating in the ocean. Jesus sees you from the shore. Out of great love and grace, he dives into the water and swims toward you.

He drags you to shore. He performs chest compressions on you. Finally, he places his mouth on yours and breathes the breath of life into your lungs. Your heart starts beating and your lungs fill with air. You cough and gasp. You breathe. You were dead and now you're alive. You embrace Jesus and won't let go.

Which of those 2 illustrations would you say best describes the way Jesus saves us by grace?

Salvation is not earned or deserved.

Salvation is not added to by our works.

It is the gift of God to guilty sinners.

But you may say, "I know I am saved by grace alone but what about my faith? Didn't I contribute that? Didn't I come to Jesus?"

Yes, you did.

But..... because he gave you faith.
You breathed because.....he breathed into you.

You came because he enabled you.

You believed by faith because by his grace he gave you faith as a gift.

As we wrap up, let's look at John chapter 6.

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

**Ephesians 2:8-9,
For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

I close with a quote from Martin Luther that gets to the heart of the issue with the Reformation and the most beautiful sentence he ever wrote.

If you understand this one sentence, you understand the whole debate.

He wrote this in Heidelberg Germany on April 26, 1518 to defend his 95 Theses.

He said, **“The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it.”**

Grace + something God sees in you.....

Faith + some good works? Baptism?

or GRACE ALONE?