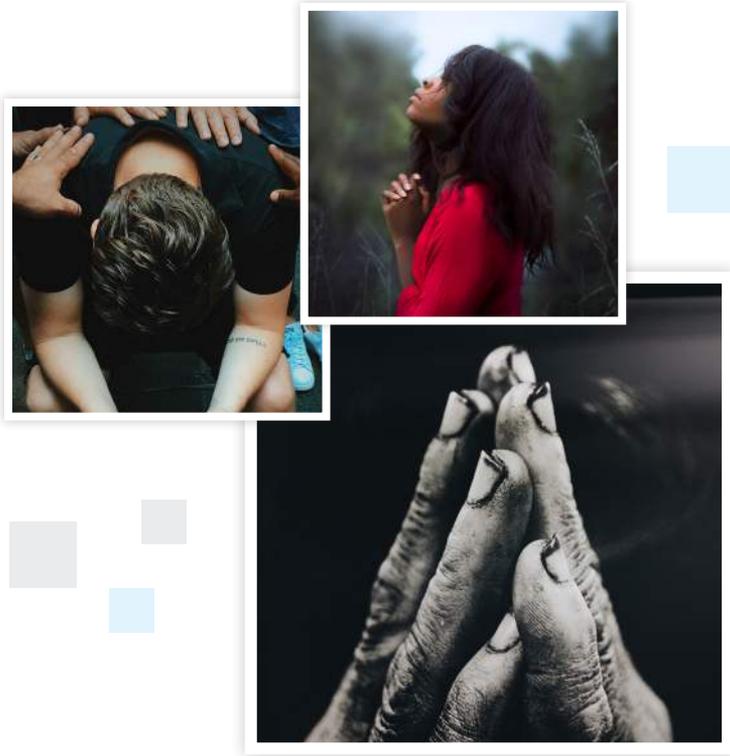


P Protestant University



STUDY GUIDE | LESSON 2

SOLA GRATIA



We continue our journey through the five primary biblical truths—the five solas—of the Protestant Reformation. This lesson will focus on *sola gratia* (grace alone).

The Recipe for Salvation

Homemade pies, breads, and casseroles can taste so good. The right ingredients in the right amounts combine to form a wonderful taste sensation. But if an ingredient is left out or a wrong ingredient is added, what would have been delectable can taste dreadful. You may like onions and you may like apple pie, for example. But what would an apple pie taste like if you added onions to it? In a similar way, if we follow God's

recipe for salvation, the salvation experience will be beautiful. If we add to God's plan, however, it can be laborious, stressful, and even disastrous.

During the Protestant Reformation, people were discovering that the plan (or recipe) for salvation as taught by the Medieval Church was not in line with the Bible. The contrast was striking between how the Church taught we receive salvation and what the Bible actually says. We want to be saved for eternity, and we know that God wants this, too. Let's consider what is and isn't included in the biblical recipe for our salvation.

The teaching of Martin Luther's day was: "...good works done after regeneration (at baptism) and justification are (if certain conditions are met) meritorious and can contribute to salvation and attainment of eternal life..."

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Two possible salvation equations were given in the video.

- 1) Grace + Faith + Good Works = Salvation
- 2) Grace + Faith + Nothing Else = Salvation

Which one do you think is right? _____

Which one have you lived out? _____

Those who said the second equation is correct are right. We tend to believe there is nothing we can contribute to our justification (Jesus' death in our place and forgiveness for our sins) but do we believe the same equation is true after we have come to Christ for salvation? Is the recipe different or is it the same? Let's look at what the Bible says.

Read Ephesians 2:8-10. What do we learn about the salvation equation?

Paul explains that our salvation is not of works, or we could boast about all we did to be saved. He also says "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." According to this passage, are works, then, a *part* of the Christian experience? Certainly. Are they *required* for salvation? Certainly not. We are His workmanship. God does good work, so if He is working on us then we will definitely do good works. Notice that it is God that is working on us. We are not working on ourselves.

Read Jeremiah 13:23. If we were working on ourselves, how successful would we be?

The video said that “we can give a mental assent to the truth of salvation by grace alone, but in practice we actually may be living our lives trying to earn or merit that salvation.” Think carefully about this for yourself. Are there any ways you are trying to “earn or merit that salvation”?

Consider the following passages and what they teach us about the power of our will to produce good works. What do you see in them that helps you know the truth or error of the statement above?

John 8:34 _____

Romans 6:1-7, 11 _____

Galatians 2:20 _____

Ephesians 2:1,5 _____

Colossians 2:13 _____

Should the human will be included in the equation for salvation? Consider this quotation from page 18 of the inspirational book *Steps to Christ*: “Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness.”

The human will is powerless, useless, and totally incapable of meriting salvation or changing our fallen condition. Only the grace of God, which saves us from our death and enslavement to sin, can give us this gift. We cannot free ourselves from slavery any more than the Israelites could free themselves from slavery in Egypt. Only God can do that.

Read Romans 6:1-7; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:1, 5; and Colossians 2:13. What do these passages teach us about our condition?

These passages reveal that apart from Christ we are dead in our sins. There is only one thing more powerless than a slave, and that is a dead slave. With this clear revelation of our condition, how can we think we are able to produce good works to add to our salvation?

In Ephesians 2:1 we see that we don't have to remain dead in our sins. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Christ makes us alive again! Once we are alive, does that mean we can do good works to maintain our salvation? God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, but they were still powerless to get themselves (i.e. work their way) to the Promised Land. God provided everything for them.

Read John 15:5. How much does Jesus say we can do on our own? Would it be fair for God to include human works in the salvation equation if it is impossible for us to accomplish this on our own?

Read Romans 3:31. Since the Bible teaches we are saved by grace and that we can't do good works, should we give up and forget about God's commands (antinomianism)?

Read Ephesians 2:10. Based on this verse, is it possible for us to do good works?

God's laws are good (Psalm 19:7) but how can we do what God says? God has promised to "work in us to will and to do His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). God has said that "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Our salvation begins and continues with God's work in our lives.

Are good works an ingredient in the Christian life? Yes. The verses we have looked at clearly reveal that good works are part of the Christian life. Are they part of the salvation equation? According to Scripture, no. When we add our works to the ingredient list of salvation we are changing God's recipe and He is not OK with that. In Galatians 1:6-10 we read that those who proclaim "another gospel" are accursed. This is serious. Let us hold fast to God's equation: **Grace + Faith + Nothing Else = Salvation**. Will you accept this recipe both theologically and experientially? Will you thank God for His precious gift of salvation for you?

Share with God your response to His salvation equation.
