

IS GOD'S WORK ENOUGH?

*Why "Sola Gratia" Means
Grace + 0, Not Grace + X*



Is GOD'S WORK SUFFICIENT?

Why "Sola Gratia" Means Grace + 0, Not Grace + X

Introduction

There is a single question, framed in two closely related but distinct ways, which, once honestly faced, exposes Arminian / Synergistic theology (hereafter referred to as "A/S") at its foundation. It forces the system to collapse beneath its own logic. The issue is neither abstract nor overly technical. It is practical, unavoidable, and simple enough for any thoughtful believer to grasp.

Using the following method, my argument will proceed from the lesser to greater in terms of weight, significance, as follows.

Logical – A simple Principle Carries a lot of weight

Ontological – Tying the issue to the Incarnate God Himself.

Textual – The language of scripture.

Theological – Applying A and B to the conclusion.

This list is not intended in a purely sequential manner, but rather a cumulative one – where each argument builds on the other and is reinforced by all, regardless of the sequence each appears herein. I remind the reader of the rebuke of Proverbs – "He who answers a matter before he hears it, to him it is folly and shame." (Prov. 18:13)

The Doctrine of Salvation According to A/S Theology

A/S insists that both the Saviour and grace is necessary for salvation. It will even insist that each is indispensable – meaning there can be no salvation without both. Yet it also insists that neither Christ Himself nor His grace by itself, on its own, save. Something else added to both Christ and grace must still come from the sinner - which I will refer to as "X." They insist X is "of ourselves," meaning is not produced in us by God or His grace exclusively but is the result of a synergism of both God and us – but *ultimately* by us. The result of which is a functional salvation. I am not saying

there is any salvation which is not functional, so do not misunderstand. It will be explained in very short order. The bottom-line per A/S is that salvation occurs *only* when all 3 elements, two of which originate in and are supplied by God, the 3rd being “of ourselves” simultaneously converge. My question exposes the fatal faultline in their system.

The Question Stated Two Ways

- I. At what *precise* point does the grace of God cease to be the decisive cause of salvation, and the human will become the determining factor?
- II. At what *specific* place does grace say, “This is as far as my influential power can or will go. I now pass the baton to you. It is now completely out of my hands and *solely* in yours”?

No consistent answer has ever been given by A/S, because any answer immediately destroys the claim that salvation is by grace alone - “Sola Gratia.” A claim that all A/S doctrine formally affirms but in functional teaching and testimony, denies.

I. The Logical Argument

Necessary but Not Sufficient? The Subtle Reversal of the Gospel

To say that grace is necessary but not sufficient is to reverse the gospel while keeping its vocabulary. It is to affirm grace verbally or “formally” for my purposes here, while denying its actual power - its true functionality. This is an egregious and self-evident contradiction. Grace, in this view, does not save. It only enables the sinner to essentially save himself or herself by their choice to believe, accept, surrender, cooperate, obey. Regardless of how they try to evade the obvious, the bottom line is obvious; If *anything* - whatever it is, to whatever degree it is – must be added to grace, then “Sola Gratia” is thereby denied. In which case, we no longer have

Salvation = grace + 0.

We instead now have

Salvation = grace + *my* X.

This is not advanced theological reasoning. It is grade-school logic.

Any grade school student knows that if anything is added to 0 – regardless of how small it may be, then one no longer has 0. In the following equation $0 + 0.001$ is still more than net 0. With this logical principle in mind, we need to ask; Is it possible to maintain the true, complete doctrine of grace - alone, when we also speak of the simultaneous need for *addition* of X supplied by us to be added to it? No, it is not. To even suggest it is possible reveals a substantial lack in comprehension of the doctrine or even the basic grammar - the obvious meaning of the word “alone.” Per the A/S system, to obtain salvation, the sinner must supply the one element neither God nor His grace supply – that X is not inherent in or supplied / provided by grace alone. Until that happens, despite all He so horrifically endured for the purpose of saving that sinner, Christ has suffered in vain for that individual.

- The effect of this on the truth the gospel, while subtle, is nevertheless, truly catastrophic.

In this view, neither the cross of Christ alone nor the grace of God alone is the *sufficient* cause of salvation, only the opportunity for it. God no longer actually rescues; He merely makes rescue possible...*if* the sinner supplies X.

This is not the gospel Paul preached.

A/S insists that grace is absolutely necessary for salvation, but not in and of itself sufficient. In addition to grace, something else – X - must come from the sinner, without which salvation does not occur.

The obvious question: Can salvation exist without X?

The consistent Arminian answer is no. Grace may prepare the way and provide the means, but unless the sinner supplies X, no one is saved.

A Self-evident Logical Principle Applied

Any structure that requires more than one necessary condition for its intended result means that every necessary condition is *equally necessary on a functional basis to the outcome*. The stress point reveals the final level its necessary parts, elements may be “reduced to” while still retaining its intended function. A functional bicycle wheel depends on the precise combination of rim, spokes, tire, tube, and chain mechanism. Missing any single part makes it nonfunctional.

Applying This Principle to A/S Salvation

Whether consciously or not, A/S presents salvation as a system dependent upon multiple necessary conditions. The multiple conditions are:

- i. An objective Savior's saving work and personal worthiness of infinite worth to believe in – supplied wholly by God
- ii. Unmerited grace – supplied wholly by God.
- iii. "X" - supplied by some vague synergism between grace and the sinner.

Despite this synergism, nothing God or grace does "seals the deal," so in the *final* analysis, the decisive part gets reduced to being "of" the sinner *at the moment* salvation occurs.

Whatever they claim grace "assisted" to that outcome, it did not ensure it – the sinner alone does that by the addition of their X to Christ and grace. Only when all 3 converge is salvation present.

Per this view, when all the necessary elements are in place, the equation is not:

Salvation = A Savior + grace + 0

But

Salvation = A Saviour + grace + *my* X

Open Contradictions in Terms

Thus, we have

A "Saviour" of *infinite* intrinsic, ontological value whose death was also objectively infinite in its merit / value – who, despite this personal infinite value attached to who He is and what He did - does not actually save unless or until X is supplied by the sinner He desires to save;

"*Unmerited*" grace which cannot save of its own merit unless X is added to it by the sinner.

This now brings us to the fatal flaw that the principle of logical principle of *equal necessity to the outcome* has exposed. Since removing a single piece causes the entire system to break down, all parts are equally crucial. Meaning, none is *more* necessary or important than another in terms of the intended outcome.

- I am not speaking of intrinsic worth, moral purity, or metaphysical glory. Obviously, nothing could ever equal God or Christ in those categories.

I am speaking *only of functional necessity to the outcome*. Anything whose absence causes the system to fail becomes indispensable to that result. This concept isn't advanced or specialized reasoning; it's straightforward logic that can be easily understood and practically verified. Therefore, if someone should argue that some elements of the whole are *more important* from the functional standpoint than any other element, that idea would be shown to be demonstrably false and logically incoherent. It can be expressed mathematically and accurately thus.

His part – His person and work / grace – both of which have infinite intrinsic worthiness - is **A**.

My part – manifestly of *zero* intrinsic merit or worthiness is **B** – my X.

Together $A+B = C$ – salvation.

This the same as saying,

My part B + His part A = C

Therefore, for the intended result, functionally A is to C what B is to C.

This cannot be argued.

- **In both equations, remove either A or B and C does not exist.** That is what “equally necessary” means - and necessity to the outcome is the *only* kind of importance that matters when discussing what causes salvation.

Defining key terms

Importance = “quality or state of being important; consequence; significance” (synonyms: usefulness, effect, consequence)

Necessary = “essential, indispensable, requisite” (synonyms: crucial, decisive, paramount, vital, fundamental)

This is not mere window dressing. Words have meaning *because* they have objective definitions that are not open to subjective whim or redefinition when it suits us. Thus,

- If something is necessary, it is crucial, decisive, vital, indispensable.

- If something is crucial, decisive, vital, indispensable, it is important.

II. THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:

In His person and saving work, the Lord Jesus is intrinsically *infinitely* worthy and His death has accrued infinite merit.

Far from helping A/S, this truth only makes the problem worse, *infinitely* so!

For the other party in this equation is not a mere creature, but the Incarnate Lord of glory Himself, God in the flesh, whose intrinsic value and unspeakable suffering hold infinite worth. Yet A/S still insists that this *infinite-worthiness* and value is *still* not sufficient in and of itself for my salvation unless I add my X.

He is infinite, I am dust.

He is unimaginably holy, I am sinful – “desperately wicked”.

He is infinitely worthy; I am utterly unworthy.

His death has infinite intrinsic value, I have become “worthless” (Rom. 3:10-12)

His grace is unmerited. Full stop.

Yet none of this can save me without my X? ...*Really?*!

Is God’s Work Sufficient?

*“I know that whatever God does lasts forever. **Nothing** can be added to it...God does this so that men will fear Him.” (Eccl. 3:14)*

When Solomon wrote this, he no doubt had God’s natural works of creation in mind. But as with all things in scripture – what is the underlying principle?

➤ If God’s works in the material universe are so completely sovereign that nothing can be added to them - not merely should not, but cannot be - is the eternal salvation purchased by the death of the Incarnate God any *less* so? Does not truth move from the lesser to the greater? Is the material universe *more* important than the eternal salvation obtained by the Incarnate Son? These questions are obviously rhetorical.

Another Category Error: The Price Verses The Effect of His Death

A/S correctly affirms that the price Christ paid is of infinite worth because of who He is. I agree completely. But they deny that the intrinsic effect of His death is itself sufficient to save apart from the contribution of X from the sinner.

- The value of the death itself is infinite, but the effect is completely dependent on *my* X.

Do you how see the “*reductio ad absurdum*” here just became an ultimate insult? Not to me – but to the One they confess as Lord of infinite value?

Then they dare to say, “We don’t claim we are saved by our works”?

- So, His infinitely valuable and meritorious purchase price does not of itself secure the salvation it purchased by itself? Sorry. No sale.

What the Apostles Emphasized in Evangelism

What the apostles emphasized – not in “deeper walk Bible Study” – but in open evangelism, A/S despises. Their system almost never faces what lies at the very heart of the apostolic gospel - the apostolic emphasis on God’s absolute sovereignty over the very detailed, specific events of Christ’s suffering and death.

Peter declares, “This man was handed over to you **by God’s deliberate plan** and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23), and he makes it even more explicit in Acts 4:28: “They did what **your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.**”

God’s sovereignty did not merely “permit” vague events around the cross; it extended down to the specific acts of lying, false witness, betrayal, mockery, cruelty, inhuman torture and ultimate murder of His own Son. *Every* lash of the whip, every spit, every false accusation, every hammer blow fell within the pre-ordained will of God and brought about by *His power* Peter said! Not merely His passive, sovereign permission – but His power!

Think about it If God’s sovereignty can and did extend in the negative to the precise acts of wickedness that crucified Christ, are we really going to argue that the same sovereignty cannot extend in the positive to save those for whom Christ died? Isn’t that, in fact, the entire point of the cruelty in the first place? Christ did not endure the cross merely to make salvation possible; He endured it to secure, accomplish, and apply salvation to “His people” (Matt. 1:21).

- If God by His foreknowledge *and power*, in order to bring about redemption, meticulously governed the darkest evils - down to each specific cruelties horrifically visited on His beloved Son - *why* would we suddenly imagine that He steps back and leaves the decisive moment of salvation to the autonomous will of fallen, corrupt sinners?

If God did not so meticulously govern the specifics of all that befell His Son, then what or who did? Did something happen to the Lord that caught the Father unawares? Was He left thinking to Himself, “How did that just happen?” Was anything by accident? If so, that opens the door to the idea that Jesus might have been able to suffer *less* – for unless the Father knew what every “drop” of the “cup” was, what it meant physically and what its precise effects were – *how could He possibly know if Jesus had suffered too much? Or too little?*

The cruelty was for the very purpose of salvation.

Therefore, to claim that God may act with sovereign-power in the negative only, to apply *only* the purchase-price of redemption, but not also sovereignly in the positive to apply the effect of redemption, is not merely inconsistent, it is woefully incoherent. It is a falsehood that is utterly unbiblical as we have and will continue to see.

- **Such a view does not exalt human freedom; it rather diminishes the very purpose of the cross.**

In Acts 16:31, the answer given to the question of the Philippian jailor does not undermine sola gratia - it rather assumes it. Paul commands the jailer to believe because faith is the appointed instrumental means of salvation, *not because faith is the self-generated cause of it*. The very next verse shows that Paul explains the gospel, and elsewhere the apostles make it unmistakably clear that salvation, from first to last, rests on the sovereign grace of God. The gospel does not tell sinners, “Do nothing”; it tells them, “Believe.” *But that represents an indicative truth only – it tells what must be done. It does not at all speak to how or why it is or even can be.*

- The real question remains: who makes that believing possible?

And on that point, Scripture is unambiguous: “*By grace* you have been saved... and this is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

The Fatal Reversal Of the Biblical Truth

In Scripture, the very purpose of the price is to secure the effect. The blood of Christ does not merely make salvation possible; it actually purchases a people.

“You were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20).

“He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11).

“He gave His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

If the ransom is paid, the captives it paid for are released. Period.

If the price is sufficient, the outcome is secured. Period.

Yet A/S separates the two:

- The price is infinite.
- The effect remains uncertain - suspended on X.
 - This means that from the *functional* perspective, the decisive hinge of salvation shifts away from Christ’s “IT IS FINISHED” accomplishment to an “It is PENDING” awaiting the sinner’s decisive contribution.

Why is it that nothing can be added to what God does? God does this so that men will fear – reverence, hold Him in the highest awe possible. Yet *how* does the all-sufficient God of infinite intrinsic value... who supposedly cannot save apart from my X, inspire the kind of dumbstruck awe Solomon refers to?”

Breaking It Down Further

Per A/S – *nothing* of His doing is or even can be decisive, but my X is? He is of intrinsic, immeasurable worth and merit; I am “a worm,” “dust,” “sinful,” “utterly unworthy,” but it is *my* act that is the decisive / determining factor so to speak?

There is simply no way around this. Does that mean they will admit the obvious and recant the incoherence of their view? Probably not. I am not so naïve. But it does mean that their view is deeply incoherent because it is now fully exposed by

- the undeniable logic of equal necessity to outcome.
- basic language.
- the infinite worth of Christ Himself.

My refutation has moved from the lesser to the greater; Logic – ontology – textual. Nothing and no one is greater than the incarnate God Himself in any capacity – we all would affirm that. **The problem for A/S is precisely the fact that Christ and His death do possess infinite, intrinsic value, worth and merit.**

- It all hinges on one single compound word: ALL-SUFFICIENCY
- A term I refuse to redefine or soften.

The preceding has now revealed two fatal flaws.

1. Their system reduces to this: In short, A/S leaves us with a Christ whose work is infinitely worthy, yet functionally insufficient in effect - which is precisely what the gospel of Sola Gratia – grace alone, does not and cannot allow.
2. They redefine common meanings at whim, without the apparent understanding to see the obvious logical incoherence in so doing.

The Gospel is a message communicated through words that carry inherent power due to their objective meaning, rather than subjective interpretations that can be altered at will. This message focuses on both the concrete historical facts - the person, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ - *and the significance behind those events*. Without understanding what these events mean and what they accomplished, the history alone is incomplete and lacks relevance. The meaning answers essential questions like what happened, why it matters, and its effects. It is only when both the facts and their meaning are present together that we truly have “the gospel”; otherwise, we merely possess fragments rather than the complete message.

III. THE TEXTUAL ARGUMENT

The Galatian problem

The “problem” at Galatia - for which the entire epistle was written to address / expose *and condemn* - was not an open, intentional denial of the historical, objective fact of the death and resurrection of Christ. If not an open denial of those facts, what was it? *An addition to them by means of X – from self.*

➤ It was an issue pertaining to the theological /practical meaning of those facts, not the objective facts themselves. This proves that for Paul “the gospel” is not the facts apart from their correct meaning. If the bare historical facts of the death and resurrection are exhaustively the gospel – as many are mistakenly led to believe or assume, based on their superficial reading of passages like 1 Cor. 15:1-5; Rom. 10:9-10; John 3:16 etc, then Paul’s severe condemnation in Galatians becomes meaninglessly irrelevant. As well as impossibly self-contradictory.

➤ Even if that addition is by way of that which all agreed came from God – His holy law, Paul still condemned it! *Think about the implications of this.*

“The Law”, per Paul

- Is “good, holy and just”
- Came from God Himself
- Yet cannot be mingled with grace in any capacity without being condemned by Paul as “another gospel”
- To hold to it + grace means one has been “severed from Christ,” “fallen from grace.” The result of which is that “Christ will profit you nothing.”
- Those who preach it, “even if an angel from heaven – let him be anathema maranatha” - condemned when Jesus comes.

➤ If language like this is used to expose, refute and condemn adding to grace that which all agree came from the *thrice-holy* God Himself – His own law, what do you suppose Paul would say about adding that X which comes from *sinful* man?

The stakes are very high now.

The fatal consequence.

At best then, in the A/S view, His personal merit and the merit of everything He did are reduced to being co-dependent on the the sinner's act by the addition of their X. Only when the sinner adds their own X to Christ's infinite merit and unmerited grace, is salvation present.

A/S Objection: "We do not teach we are saved by keeping the Law in any degree. We teach we must make a simple choice to believe, receive, accept, obey. It is a false equivalence to make a simple choice = Paul's condemnation of adding the works of the Law to grace."

My reply: Think about it. Such an objection reveals an obvious lack of understanding of the subject matter at hand. For by claiming that "it's just a choice," not a "work," they reveal they have completely missed the forrest for the trees here. What is the single, most basic, immediate and first requirement that God's Law requires? *Choose!* Everything the Law says and requires is predicated on, beginning and ends with choice or will. One of the most oft-cited passages by all A/S both modern and historic is found in Moses' instruction to Israel after their 40 years of wandering the wilderness where he said, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." Therefore, the only ones being disingenuous here and guilty of false equivalence in reverse, not to mention obvious incoherence, are A/S; because to even imply "all we are talking about is a choice, not a work of the Law," reveals they

- Do not understand either their own language or what the Law is.
- Do not understand its own nuance.
- Do not recognize the obvious that "begs the question" – a choice to do what if not obey? Which is the entire point of the Law!

A/S Objection: "Faith is not a command. Therefore, you cannot equate it to the commands of the Law."

My reply: If that were so, evidently, John did not get that memo because he said, "This is His *command* – to believe on the name of His son" (1 John 3:23). Nor did Paul who said his ministry was to call the Gentiles to "*the obedience of faith*" (Rom. 1.5) We are therefore, still at the same *functional* equivalent of "the Law" here, which is simply: "Do this and live"

Thus, their attempt to evade, obscure or deny the obvious, by some false dichotomy between what Paul condemned at Galatia and what they preach as being “not a work, just a choice” is now exposed for the incoherent contradiction it is. Having now exposed the fatal-flaw in all A/S, I will now address another substantial category-error made by them.

The “Sufficient / Efficient” Fallacy

To promote the falsehood that the death of the Son of God can be truly “sufficient” for its intended purpose of salvation by means of it, yet simultaneously not be efficient, is bad enough based on how illogical it is. In my opinion, it is truly *reductio ad absurdum* at its height of expression. Here is why. In this sufficient but not efficient structure, while Christ and grace are truly necessary for salvation - neither are truly sufficient for it. “Sufficient” means enough *to achieve the goal*. For example, he had sufficient money to buy the car without borrowing more.

- In this scenario, is there a valid distinction between the purchaser having sufficient funds for the *intended* purchase verses those funds not being efficient for the same purpose? No in the least!

Yet that is precisely what A/S argues is true of the death of Christ! This is basic grammar-school stuff here. In the context of salvation, if God’s gift of Christ - His sacrifice, resurrection, and grace - are sufficient, then nothing further is required from anyone, by anyone that is not inherently satisfied by the sufficiency of His work *and supplied by grace*. This means that there can be no X – supplied by the sinner which is “of yourselves” that must be added to His part.

- This does *not* deny X is a necessary element. Per scripture, it is. Rather, this sufficiency requires that all essential elements *for the end result* are inherently provided by and through Christ’s person, work and grace alone – “Sola Christus” and “Sola Gratia.” **If this is not so, then manifestly, it is not “sufficient.”**

Is faith needed for salvation? Certainly, but *because* “Sola Gratia” (grace alone) truly provides everything “necessary”, it also supplies the faith required for salvation. Faith is therefore not something generated by the sinner; rather, it is given or produced by God through His grace alone. Not that His “prevenient-grace” – so called - in some vague, non-specific way “assists” the sinner to believe, but on the final consideration, determined solely by the sinner, per A/S. But that faith itself is produced by grace alone in the sinner. **This alone maintains the sufficiency of grace – and the actual meaning of the word “alone” without redaction of it until it no longer resembles the word itself.**

You may hold that grace needs something else added to it if you will. That may not appear to be an immediate contradiction. To determine if it is so, would require detailed explanation, analysis. But to claim grace is sufficient but simultaneously dependent on something else; outside itself - not inherently supplied by it – is a contradiction. A rather obvious one.

➤ **Grace does not “pass the baton” here - it carries the sinner to the finish line!**

Therefore, to suggest – in *this* context of the purchase-price of atonement - that anything can be both “sufficient” in and of itself yet also be simultaneously “inefficient” is an open, obvious and catastrophic categorical error. It is an absurdity refuted by common life, lexical definition and logic. *If the death of Christ is truly sufficient for salvation, then nothing outside that sufficiency can be required to make it effective.* If that is true – and it is - why are all not saved by it?

“Because they did not believe in it or accept it.”, says A/S. “It is sufficient to save them on its own merit, but cannot do so apart from their X.”

So then, despite

- I. Having endured all He did for the purpose of saving them.
- II. His personal and its intrinsic value and worth it still cannot save them on its own merit unless they add their X?
- III. Right. So, we’re back to it being insufficient then. Sufficient but not intrinsically efficient?

Note: I am not here claiming *everything in every possible context* that can be said to be sufficient is thereby automatically efficient. For example, medicine may indeed be sufficient to cure an ailment. That does not mean it will automatically be efficient to

do so. To be efficient, it must be applied. If not applied, such does not reflect a lack of sufficiency in the medicine – only a realization that application is required for efficiency.

This is in principle, the essence of the A/S claim that while the atonement is sufficient for all, it only becomes efficient when “applied” by the autonomous choice of the sinner.

However, God both *prescribed and produced* the remedy – Therefore, He may administer it as He – not we – wills.

The problem is that the effect of the cross is not a material thing – like a pain killer or bottle of medicine. It is a metaphysical reality of forgiveness of sin, resulting in justification through faith - which God – not the sinner – prescribes, produces and applies the remedy or effect of it. In the case of the physical medicine, the patient needs to be proactive by application. Only then does it become efficient. The Doctor may diagnose and prescribe but not does produce either the medicine or the result. However, in the case of the cross, both of these are simply not true of God. Rather, God

1. Both prescribed and produced the cure by Himself.
2. Because of this, He can effectually apply the cure so that it is efficient and sufficient at the same time, to whom He wills, as He wills, per His saving purpose. Not only can He do so, per scripture, that is precisely what He has done and does do – “He has mercy on whom He wills...Therefore, He has mercy on whom He wills...” (Rom. 9:16-18).
3. This makes the sufficient but not efficient dichotomy – when referring to the atonement, which is the only context I am concerned with – invalid.
4. This will become much clearer as we proceed.

Thus,

- The moment grace is no longer sufficient, *Sola Gratia* has already been denied.
- The moment Christ is no longer sufficient, *Sola Christus* has already been denied.
- “*Sola Fide*” – faith alone, is still essential and correct, because God has “presented Him as atoning sacrifice *through faith* in His blood.” But *Sola Fide*

does not contradict Sola Gratia because it flows entirely out of Sola Gratia. This is what I meant when I said God both diagnosed and prescribed and produced the remedy by Himself.

- Introduce any other element than that – regardless of the size, degree or relative importance you, not grace alone has produced your X and you have denied the “Sola.”

Paul’s Structural Elimination of Synergism

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *“For by grace you are saved through faith - and that not yourselves it is the gift God, not of works lest anyone should boast.”*

Paul does not only say that salvation is “not of works.” A/S might wish he had because they think a distinction Paul made between faith and works, helps them. However, that will also be shown to be yet another catastrophic category-error, based on their misread and therefore invalid application of Paul’s distinguishing between faith verses works.

If their understanding and application were valid, they would have a case on that point. However, as easily - meaning as self-evidently - as irreducible complexity revealed the fatal contradiction and theological error of their claim to affirm Sola Gratia, so will I likewise do for their assumption and application here.

Read carefully here.

One of these is not like the other: One excludes something crucial. Paul did not here say, “For by grace are you saved - and that not of yourselves, not of works it is the gift of God.” Full stop. If he had the synergist reading could be strengthened thereby. Paul said, “For by grace are you saved **through faith** - and **that** not of yourselves, **it** is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

In the first incomplete quote, the crucial caveat - through faith - is missing. But when the complete sentence is quoted with that caveat retained, it now has a conjunction which radically affects the only possible ways to correctly understand the meaning.

Only after “and that not of yourselves,” does Paul add the second clause, “not of works” then the final clause; the *purpose* clause – “lest any should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9).

The only question we need ask here then, is what exactly does “that” and “it” in the sentence, refer to?

The Demonstrative Pronoun (DP) in Greek grammar

Note: This is the most “technical” section of the article. For readers unfamiliar with Greek grammatical terminology, this section may feel very technical — but it is necessary. The reader is urged to stay with this section. Read and re-read it carefully in order to grasp and follow the train of thought here. Doctrine is based on words. Words have linguistic and grammatical meaning and definition which tell us what they mean in context. Since the New Testament was written in “Koine” Greek – the language of the ancient world – there are times when the precise grammar of a text is the difference between the true gospel and “a different gospel.” This absolutely is one of those times.

The normative practice of Greek grammar requires that when a DP is used in a sentence, it “points to” something else that comes before it. This is called its antecedent. “He wanted the job done, but not like *that*.” In this example, the word “that” points to the job that was done, being done differently than how the subject wanted it. In Greek a second normative “soft rule,” is that the DP must “agree” in gender and case with the antecedent nouns or verbs it points to. If there are instances where it does not so “agree,” with any of them, the normative practice is that it therefore “points to” the entire antecedent phrase or concept. Paul knew and understood Greek grammar when he wrote Ephesians 2:8-9 - “For by grace you are saved through faith - and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.”

The text has only 3 possible antecedent options which the DP “that” points to.

1. The verb phrase “you have been saved”
2. The noun “grace”
3. The noun “faith”

The problem here is that “that” does not agree in case or gender with either nouns “grace” or “faith” or the verb phrase “have been saved.” This leads us to the second

grammatical principle mentioned above: when the demonstrative does not agree with any single antecedent, it naturally points to the preceding conceptual *whole*. It must.

- Whatever “*that*” and “*it*” refer to, one thing is clear - both refer to the *same* thing. That thing or concept is what Paul explicitly declares “is *not* of yourselves.”

Understanding this, it becomes obvious why A/S must use any tactic they can to get the DP to refer to anything except faith! “It refers to grace.” Or “it refers to being saved,” they say. But not faith. Indeed – for if the DP does in fact refer to faith and that is also said to be “not of yourselves,” then A/S is instantly collapsed thereby.

This brings me to the question that begs to be asked – and answered. “Lest anyone should boast” excludes a *real* boast not an absurd one. If the DP “*that*” refers only to either the verb phrase “have been saved” or the noun “grace” - as A/S must insist in order to maintain itself - this “begs” the question; Who at Ephesus in the 1st century was teaching or assumed that either salvation or grace originate in or are “of us”? Answer, no one. Everyone agrees salvation is entirely God’s idea and His initiative, and grace comes from God - it is something He has and bestows. *Since all affirm this, and no one at Ephesus denied this, what need was there for Paul to exclude from the grounds of self-boasting an idea none taught or held to?* Consequently, there would be zero need for Paul to use the DP to “point to” either grace or have been saved.

This is a *prima facie* basis to reject the A/S claiming “that” and “it” point to grace or have been saved. It is obvious why they must argue it that way. Both phrases “and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God” and “not of works” are speaking to the *same* exclusion with a specific purpose - lest anyone should boast.

Paul is concerned with real people in real circumstances – not abstract, theoretical possibilities. Therefore, the stated purpose of his phrasing – lest anyone should boast – necessarily addresses a real, not an abstract danger which no one is in any real danger of doing! Since no one at Ephesus had claimed or was claiming either the idea and initiative of salvation and the grace of God originated in themselves, then logically – even if not in the most absolute sense of certainty – this requires the one element

which Paul knew sinful people could and would reasonably infer was “of yourselves,” is faith.

Occam’s Razor: The simplest explanation tends to be the correct one.

This then logically and contextually leaves only one credible possibility in the text that could be – *is* - misconstrued by some - indeed, by many - as being “of ourselves” - faith. Having logically, historically and contextually eliminated the other two, it is the only option left. We have now revealed what the “X” that A/S insists is “of ourselves” is - it is faith.

Another circular contradiction

In their doctrine and practice, they insist faith is “our part - our response” to God’s offer of grace but then turn and vehemently deny faith is the specific antecedent excluded by Paul’s use of the DP in Ephesians 2:8-9. In so doing, they are shown once again to be circular and logically incoherent. Because,

- In practice they insist faith is “of ourselves” being the part we supply. But then in open contradiction, deny in their doctrine that the very passage which uses that very term in the specific context of salvation and faith, declaring it is “not of yourselves”, does not refer to faith.
- So, faith is ultimately of ourselves, they insist. But when scripture denies that using their own terminology - they insist that “it” refers to something else, not faith.
- And the only other options they have for this what this ‘something else’ is, are the two things no one ever taught originate of ourselves!

This is also *reductio ad absurdum* at its finest.

The Burden of Proof

I have made a clear, reasonable, unforced argument here regarding what the specific antecedent of “that” and “it” is – faith. I arrived at this not by wild, unsupported speculation, but by,

- I. Appeal to the normative practice of Greek grammar

- II. The absence of any historical case where anyone in Ephesus taught the wildly absurd idea that the idea and execution of salvation or grace originated in us
- III. Sound logical deduction
- IV. Textual fidelity in a natural, unforced way
- V. The absence of appealing to either circular reasoning or abstract possibilities rather than Paul's being concerned with real dangers and false doctrines
- VI. The principle of Occam's Razor that the simplest explanation tends to be the right one.
- VII. The lack of cherry picking what I affirm in practice but then deny in doctrine

So, think I am wrong here? Fair enough. Demonstrate it using the *same* rigor and method, I have used here. The burden of proof is now then on the objector not me.

Synonymous Parallelism destroys the assumption

Paul uses two terms interchangeably, *synonymous* to each other - "Not of yourselves" and "not of works." These are not two different exclusions. Rather, it seems far more likely that they address the *same* exclusion stated twice, in different terms, for emphasis and clarity. This is an often-used literary device by the ancients known as Hebrew synonymous parallelism, only here expressed in Greek form. Paul – who was a Jewish man studied in the Hebrew Scriptures - is not listing two separate categories of error here. By using two terms he intends as synonymous to each other, he is eliminating one, deadly error which if persisted in carries eternal consequences. As a master theologian, entrusted by God and inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote to expose, refute and condemn **one** error from every possible angle.

That one error? The false – damnable idea that anything said to be necessary for salvation originates in or is supplied by the sinner – hence is "of yourselves."

- **For Paul, the principle is - whatever is "of yourselves" is, by definition, a "work." Thus, *if* faith originates in the sinner, is produced by the sinner *then* faith becomes the sinner's "work" by means of which they are saved.**

The genius of the apostle's construction is that he removes the both the personal *and* doctrinal, structural basis of it altogether.

Doctrinal Boasting or Personal: Paul Leaves No Room for Either

He says, “so that no one may boast.” The exclusion is absolute. It applies to the group and the individual.

➤ If a group formally affirms there is no basis for boasting of self, but their doctrinal system itself nevertheless opens the door for it and makes it possible – Paul condemns it. This is precisely the problem Paul’s parallelism was used to definitively refute.

Paul categorically excludes all grounds for self-boasting of anything that can be said to be “of yourselves.” *This is why he used both the structure of synonymous parallelism and his use of the DP he did to make his point in the most absolute way he could.*

➤ Correct doctrine is therefore identified by how rigorously and absolutely it has closed *every* possible avenue for boasting of self - in both the personal and doctrinal sense. If it does not or has not done this, it has failed the purity test of true gospel doctrine.

➤

The Effect of the True Gospel on Human Pride

The only valid response left when the true gospel is proclaimed, is humble gratitude for grace alone in all of its gifts. Full stop. Period. To make the point as emphatic as possible grammatically, Paul used the DP even though he knew it did not agree with either grace, faith or the verb phrase “have been saved.” Knowing Greek intimately, he knew the grammatical rule and normative practice, and so even though faith was the actual, specific intended antecedent of his exclusion - being the only logical possibility as we saw; he used a grammatical “tool” to toss all three under the exclusion – just for emphasis.

➤ His specific theological point was to *exclude faith* – which is for all the preceding reasons above - the only logical option for being the antecedent of “that” and “it.” **He was so determined to bury the idea that any essential element in salvation is “of ourselves” to emphasize his point – “lest anyone should boast” - he used their DP as an over-emphasis to refer to all 3!**

Paul is free to employ emphasis, overstatement, or grammatical force to drive home his theological point. And that is almost certainly what he did here. For if faith were

our contribution being “of ourselves,” we would have every legitimate right to boast of that part we supplied. In fact, we would only be telling the truth!

The Theological Completeness of Ephesians 2:5

Paul’s earlier statement in Ephesians 2:5 - “By grace you have been saved” - is not a fragment of the larger truth – it *is* the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! It is a theologically complete declaration – it leaves *nothing* essential out and allows *nothing* else to be added.

- Verses 8–9 do not introduce a new condition. They do not modify verse 5. They merely explain it in more fullness. They clarify what was already inherent in verse 5!

If anyone claims that verses 8–9 add something that verse 5 does not already contain, then the burden of proof lies squarely on them. They must show that “by grace you have been saved” is theologically incomplete. Until they can do that, any attempt to smuggle a self-generated faith into the saving act is illegitimate. And if illegitimate, then it is not merely an “innocent error” – when it touches the gospel itself, it is exposed as a falsehood, a false gospel.

A/S Objection: “You make a false equivalence here. Paul distinguished faith from works, so faith is not ‘a work’ in the sense that Paul excluded.”

My reply: Yes, Paul did make such a distinction. What he *never* did however was claim or teach that faith *was* “of yourselves!” That crucial distinction completely invalidates the basis that A/S cites this distinction for and seeks to apply it.

John 6:29: Is faith a “work”? If so, whose?

Jesus Himself decisively answers this question for us - “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:29) The Greek word for “work” that Jesus used here – “the work of God” - is the same word Paul used in Ephesians 2:8-9 “not of works.” It is “*ergon*” - “act, accomplishment, doing.” Jesus therefore explicitly affirmed faith or belief in Him is a “work,” (doing, act, accomplishment) – but not the “work” *of man*. It is work - the doing, act, accomplishment *of God*. He used the genitive of origin here.

In Greek the phrase is “*ergon tou theou*” – work of, from God as source.

Jesus did not say faith is the *ergon epi theou* - work in God, or *ergon pros theou* - work towards God. The way He said it clearly shows He meant as the *genitive of source* – faith “of / from God.” When Paul differentiated faith from works, he did so *because* he excluded works that originate in the sinner – that therefore are “of yourselves.” Jesus expresses the same truth; faith as a work – a doing, deed, accomplishment that originates causally in and from God. It is therefore, as Paul expressly said, “not of ourselves.”

- John 6:29 then, when added to the entire preceding argument for why I insist the DP points to faith as being the primary antecedent of “that” and “it” makes the case airtight.

The A/S has no room left to maneuver here. Every possible escape hatch they can or do use, has been closed.

Together Paul and Jesus form a seamless doctrine:

- Because faith is the only clear logical, historical and natural antecedent of “that” in Eph. 2:8-9, with “it” being in the absolute sense, “not of yourselves,” it is for that that reason simultaneously synonymous with “not of works.”
- Both statements, therefore, do not speak to exclude a different category - but exclude one error, stated two ways for emphasis.
- This then becomes a Hebrew Parallelism in Greek form. Paul is the same exclusion two different ways as a matter of total emphasis.
- Eph. 2:8-9 - faith is therefore simultaneously not “of ourselves” - which is the same thing as saying, “not of works” because IF it were “of yourselves,” then for Paul it is can only be rightly understood as a “work.”
- Since no one would claim faith is an unrighteous work - act, doing, accomplishment - it can only be thought of as a righteous one. Paul said the same truth to Titus - “He saved us not by works of righteousness which *we* have done, but according to His mercy.” Not because we performed the righteous act of believing. But saved by His mercy. Period. “*Sola Gratia*” because even our belief was inherently supplied and produced by His grace. *Here again, is the same exclusion stated again by Paul – nothing we did,*

do and even can do is the reason why God actually saves us. The fact that we are saved is entirely Sola Gratia – period.

➤ THIS IS THE GOSPEL, because there is no need to exclude God’s own work from that which pleases Him. But there is every reason to exclude that which is *ours*.

Does it matter this much? YES!

The reason Paul so distinguished faith from works, is because *only* the work of Christ satisfies the justice of God against our sin. *Nothing* we do, have, bring or produce can do so! The faith that Paul distinguished from works is the faith that passively receives the objective righteousness of Christ alone. Meaning, by faith His righteousness is imputed to the sinner. It is imputed because no “work” of the sinner can subjectively attain the same righteousness by active choice, act or effort. **It *must* be imputed otherwise it is forever unattainable!** If Christ’s objective righteousness - wholly earned by virtue of His person and work - through the means of grace-produced, granted faith – is not the only righteousness God would accept, the Father brutalized the Son as the sin-bearing substitute for no valid reason. Paul said it like this,

“I do set aside the grace of God - if righteousness is of the Law, then Christ died for nothing.” (Gal. 2:21).

Meaning if the righteousness God will accept is produced or brought about or becomes efficient by *anything* we do or that originates in our choice, will or effort - for all of that is the very premise of a “work” which Paul categorically denies - then Christ died for nothing.” But thankfully, His death *is* sufficient! And for that reason, it is equally simultaneously efficient!

For these reasons, Luther correctly saw and understood that there are in truth only two types of material things in scripture –

“Law” – what God requires be done or not

and

“Gospel” – what God has accomplished in, by and through Christ with respect to what He requires.

Every command, admonition, imperative of scripture in - including the command to believe, in either covenant is therefore either,

- the result of the sinner trying in their own strength to attain the righteousness of God
- The result of the gospel-truth of Sola-Gratia.

There is no third option in the New Testament.

So, yes, it does matter this much because what is at stake is not merely a requirement to have exactly the correct verbal formula - but the correct understanding of the correct gospel itself. The necessity of the formula is that it refers to the same without any alternation or contradiction - subtle or overt.

“Christ and Him crucified” - Not Christ + your X

Paul hit the same truth yet again in Galatians saying, “You were running so well. Who has hindered you? You saw it clearly – Christ and Him crucified” (Gal. 3:1-3).

Paul’s emphasis here is intentional. “Christ and Him crucified” not “Christ, Him crucified plus your own “X.” Why? Because that death is *sufficient*. “Christ crucified” was Paul’s theological shorthand for the truth of “Sola Gratia” - it inherently encompasses the objective, historical, as well as the soteriological meaning of the objective historical facts. The why, for whom and with what results are therefore as essential to the gospel as the historical facts.

- This alone is the gospel and Paul condemned *any addition to it because any addition is really a subtraction from it.*

When God is the *causal* source – not merely the object – of faith, per Jesus in John 6:29, echoed by Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, **only then may faith be a “work” as Jesus called it – yet still be valid without contradiction to Ephesians 2:8-9.** But if faith is the “doing, act, accomplishment” of man, even if “assisted” by grace – Paul absolutely would make such a distinction. Paul knew what Jesus taught and meant. And reiterated it in Ephesians.

That is the crucial difference which not merely closes the escape hatch that the A/S relies on here, it obliterates it!

The Litmus test A/S Cannot Survive

Press any A/S with this penetrating question; *Why* are you a Christian?

Pay attention to their answer. “I am a Christian *because I chose to do X* - accept God’s gift and believe” – is the #1 answer you will get.

Press them further - I did not ask if you made a choice to accept anything. I asked you *why* you made *that* choice? Why did / does the message of Christ resonate as truth with you so deeply that you made this choice? Why did / does no other religious or worldview do likewise?

At this point - per my repeated in-person experience with many - they will usually stop and just stare at you saying nothing because you have now pressed them into a corner they cannot escape from by means of a simple question that forces either an abandonment of their system itself or an open denial of “Sola Gratia.”

A/S Objection: “You’re making this too technical, confusing. Falsely equating intellectual ability to articulate according to a pre-decided formula rather than the sincerity of the heart.”

My reply: Jesus said, “the tree is known by its fruit” – an oft-cited A/S favorite text. And “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45; Matt. 12:36) And as such, what a person persistently speaks is the functional form which reveals their heart. **Their heart reveals their boast and their confidence.** Which is why He also said, “By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). Jesus was not teaching salvation by works. Rather, He understood what words reveal - especially persistently used ones.

“John’s baptism; was it of God or men?” Jesus used the same type of in-depth, penetrating questions intended to force an answer. When the Pharisees challenged Him about where His authority came from, Jesus’ counter was a challenge for them with a question which is identical in structure as mine above. He asked, “John’s Baptism – where did it come from? From men or God?” (Matt.21:25-27) Jesus knew what He was asking and why He did. His question required a specific response. Not a haggle between positions – but a commitment to one position. The Pharisees saw His intent. They reasoned among themselves ‘If we say it came from God, He will say ‘why then did you not accept John’s testimony about Me?’ If we say it came from

men, the people will revolt against us because they hold John to be a prophet.” The Pharisees knew Jesus had thereby exposed the fatal flaw in their premise. His question was intentionally crafted to expose it and force a specific response. Knowing they were forked – they took the way of cowardice by refusing to answer. But despite their position being exposed as the inconsistent, incoherent fallacy it was, they were not won over by the logical soundness of His argument.

This raises an important point. No one did or could – in my opinion – argue with more validity or authority than the incarnate Lord. Despite this self-evident truth, Jesus did not ‘win’ over more by means of it. Pride, blindness, deception and hardness of heart are all very real realities and all impact the outcome.

IV. THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN AND HIS DIAGNOSTIC VERDICT

The heart of stone and the heart of flesh

God can, has and does overcome these conditions when and as it pleases Him, for ‘nothing is too difficult’ for Him.

Think about it: What *practical* need is there for God to “remove the heart of stone” and “give a heart of flesh” per His word in Ezekiel 36:24-26? What is a heart of stone if not the internal stubborn, hostility to truth and lack of compliance to His will? Conversely, what is the heart of flesh if not the opposite?

- **And more importantly, if the sinner must first supply the will or compliance before God can or will do so, what is He actually doing then? In such a case His action would be at best anti-climatic and at worst irrelevant.**

So this is precisely why God is the One who alone has the right and power to not only prescribe the remedy He alone produces, but also to apply it to whom, for whom He will; it is why true faith is not “of ourselves” but is in its entirety “the work – doing, act, accomplishment – of God. And it also precisely why no may boast of faith being self-generated.

A “Blessed Inconsistency”?

Many in worship, resonate passionately with grace-themed hymns and songs of praise. They passionately sing “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling” but they then preach “I chose and did...” They sing “‘Twas grace that taught my to fear” - then testify, talk and preach – hence, *boast* of their choice to believe, accept, obey and do. They sing, “This is all my righteousness nothing but the blood of Jesus...ALL other ground is sinking sand,” but then persistently talk of and emphasize their choice and or works of obedience.

Note. *I have never herein denied that choices are real.* But there is a massive difference between saying “I chose X *because of the grace of God alone*” and functionally denying its power in teaching and testimony after I just extolled it in worship. The former is consistency in both doctrine and practice. The latter is glaring inconsistency that becomes open, obvious and incoherent contradiction in practice. Such a contradiction - when the result of genuine ignorance, may be excused to a point. As such, it may rightly be deemed a “blessed inconsistency.” When such persists by stubborn pride, in rebellion to having been exposed to the truth yet now intentionally holding to that which has been exposed as the false - it is certainly not!

A Little Leaven Ruins the Whole Lump

Paul warned the Galatians – it is the leaven of the Judaizers, dressed in different clothing in this modern era, which Paul said if indulged even a little “leavens the whole lump.” (Gal. 5:9) Did you catch that? When it comes to the context of what the the gospel is – for that is the entire point of the epistle - it does not take a *big* lie to obscure the truth and turn into a false gospel. Rather, a *little* leaven will leaven the whole thing.

➤ That is how precious this is to God.

That is why THIS is THE fight worth fighting! The cause that is worth the strife. The pearl worth the price of being rejected, ridiculed and maligned.

➤ **We zealously guard what is most valuable and precious. We are careless with what is not.**

This is why the Synod of Dort condemned Arminianism as a system, while leaving room for God to rescue individuals out of it. A false gospel may be preached by

sincere people - but sincerity does not transform error into truth. If it did, the *entire purpose* of Galatians is rendered meaningless.

Something you will not find in Galatians, Ephesians, Romans or Corinthians

At no time in any of these doctrinal-heavy epistles did Paul say,

“I know you are sincere in your heart, just confused in your head. So, it is ok. God is more concerned with your sincerity than His glory in your salvation. As long as you are sincere, that is all that ultimately matters. Sorry for bothering you all with all this emphasis on doctrine. My bad. We all know that doctrine does not save, Jesus does. So I should not have made such a fuss over doctrine and troubled you all with words suggesting you were in danger of damnation itself, having fallen from grace, so quickly deserted Christ for another gospel – which is really not a gospel, saying you are bewitched, and calling down eternal condemnation on any – even an angel from heaven, if they preach a so-called ‘gospel’ which adds anything of self to grace. Sorry my friends. Please disregard this epistle in its entirety.

Love and blessing,

Paul.”

This brings us to yet another strong - too often ignored warning of Paul.

“A different Jesus, gospel or spirit”? (2 Cor. 11:3)

Paul warned the Corinthians of their apparent willingness to embrace a “different Jesus, a different gospel, or a different spirit” (2 Cor. 11:3). Think about the staggering implications here! Did Paul write this to the cults only? Or the world of unbelievers? No. *He wrote it to the church - an assembly he himself founded no less!* If true that “doctrine doesn’t matter, as long as we just love Jesus,” because “as long as we are right in the heart, it doesn’t matter if we are wrong in the head,” what is the relevance of this warning?

CONCLUSION: The Question That Began It, Ends the Debate

We have come full circle. We end back at the same question I began with. There are only two possible positions – two views of salvation / the cross.

Either grace saves completely, decisively and independently or the sinner does by producing their own faith – apart from which, they are not saved.

One is 100% consistent with Sola Gratia. The other is openly, diametrically its opposite.

Every escape hatch protesting one may have their self-generated faith and still hold Sola Gratia, has not merely been closed – but demolished from within the logic of their own structure itself.

- There is only one view which faithfully upholds all of these truths simultaneously without even a hint of compromise or contradiction to itself - the soteriological view known as “Sovereign-Grace.”

This is not the view which merely agrees grace has served as its initiating source - but has Him as the sufficient cause of salvation in *all of its necessary components*, including the faith which believes and therefore, receives (John 1:12; 1 Cor. 1:29; Acts 18:27; I Tim. 1.15; Matt. 16:17; Eph. 2:5, 8-9; Titus 3.5).

- And the entire point of his epistle to the Galatians, what is a false gospel cannot save anyone! This is demonstrated by the severity of his language - not my opinion. Those who preach it - ‘Let them be anathema Maratha’ Those who hold it - ‘You have fallen from grace,’ (to fall from grace is to fall to something else in its place. It may borrow grace’s language, it may resemble grace - but it is not grace), ‘you are severed from Christ,’ and ‘Christ will profit you nothing.

The question we started with at the outset, has now faithfully, rigorously, logically, contextually, grammatically - therefore undeniably - exposed the fatal flaw in A/S as being the subtle but no less real distortion of the truth Paul proclaimed.

➤ **One must yield to the other - and the truth of the gospel never yields to us!**

If they answer, “Because of the grace of God alone” you will have successfully dismantled their entire synergistic framework. If they do not answer “Because of the grace of God alone,” you will have just exposed the obvious fact that they deny Sola Gratia.

1 Corinthians 15:10 - The Death of the Synergistic Boast In Paul

Contrast the synergist structure with Paul’s.

“By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace was not without effect for I worked harder than the rest – yet not I but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Paul said of his own conversion, “the grace of God was exceedingly abundant with faith...” (1 Tim. 1:15).

- Where Paul - excluded self by ‘his necessary “yet not I,” A/S fights to retain it in the mix!
- Claiming to be faithful to Paul’s gospel, they do not reflect it or his example as the apostle who taught it.

A Final Necessary Caveat

Scripture affirms the difference between genuine ignorance and rebellion to revelation. The former may be excused up to a point - the latter, when it concerns the gospel itself - is severely condemned by Paul without exception; Paul condemned both those who taught it and those who - even if through process of deception that was not intentional to begin with - hold it. To both, “Christ will profit you nothing” Paul said. This is the same functional result as “let him be anathema maranatha.” God alone knows and can differentiate between what is genuine ignorance and rebellion. Judgment belongs to Christ - not myself. My obligation is to be faithful - His is to judge or save.

But He who is THE TRUTH incarnate does not save *by* a false gospel, but *from* it. He can certainly save in it, but the Spirit of truth does not honour that which He inspired Paul to condemn.

➤ If He saved by means of a false gospel, why not also a false god?

And if by a false gospel, then as we have seen Galatians as a whole loses all relevance. For Paul, only objective means to determine whether the “Jesus” one embraces is the true, real one – the only one who can save – or is a different one; a falsehood; an imposter who does not actually exist but has been subtly woven in such a way that he closely resembles the true, but is not the true. What is that one way?

“Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will **ensure salvation for both yourself and those who hear you.**” (1 Tim. 4:26)

The “Solus” matter and they always will.