

Sola Gratia — The Decisive Grace of God

Sola Gratia is not the claim that grace merely makes salvation possible, it is the confession that grace *actually accomplishes it*. Grace is not God's contribution awaiting ours; it is God's action that creates what it commands, grants what it requires, and secures what it begins.

If grace only assists, then the decisive hinge of salvation lies in man. But if grace is *truly* grace – properly and fully defined rather than redacted as a mere synonym for mercy, then the decisive turning of the heart from darkness to light, from death to life, is *not* self-generated, but God-wrought. The will is not bypassed or violated by God in this; it is liberated. For prior to divine illumination, the will does not stand in neutral freedom, but in bondage to darkness. If this were not so, many of the prayers and statements in scripture which speak to the need for a *new* “heart” become hopelessly marred and irrelevant.

✚ **Grace does more than illuminate; it transforms desire itself.**

David - now fully aware of the depths of his depravity, does not ask merely for clearer sight, but for a *totally changed* heart: “Create in me a clean heart...renew a right spirit within me” (cf. Psalm 51:10-12). Again, “Unite my heart to fear Your name” (cf. Psalm 86:11). To “unite” in this sense means to align in single purpose and desire. The very prayer is an admission that the “heart” – the inward desires, longings and understanding – hence, choices - are “divided.” This is not the language of mere assistance only, but of recreation whereby a divided, resistant will is made whole and rightly inclined. The very word used in Psalm 51 is the same word used in Genesis 1 - “God *created* the heavens and the earth.” Even as He brought creation into existence “ex nihilo” – “out of nothing,” so likewise, this creation of a *new* heart in David will not be a mere mending of the old, but the giving of the new.

And this raises the unavoidable question:

Where did David get the idea of making such a request?

He does not ask for help to complete what lies within his own native power. He asks God to do what he himself cannot do; to create, to renew, to unite. Such petitions are not speculative; they are born of revelation. David asks this *because* he knows this is what God does. But *how* did David come to know this? At that time, the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel – with God's promises to *give* such an heart - had not yet written. There was no command in the Torah which said, “If you find yourself unable

to comply, just ask for a new, undivided heart.” But there *was* a summary conclusion of Moses after being with Israel for 40 years in the wilderness that is packed full of deeper-truth theology from which David – by the illumination of the Holy Spirit – could infer and ask God for that which God had *not* given to Israel at that time (Deut 29:4)

- **And *how*, practically speaking, would David – or anyone - know that God had answered such a prayer?**

Only one way: the result would be self-evident. A new heart. A unified will. A changed desire. Not merely the *possibility* of obedience, but the *presence* of it.

- ✚ **The prayer itself assumes that when God acts, the effect is real, discernible, and transformative.**

This is precisely the promise later made explicit in Ezekiel 36:24–26: “I will take you... I will cleanse you... I will give you a new heart... I will put My Spirit within you.” The emphasis is unmistakable, **I will**. Not an offer, not a mere provision, but a divine act that changes the inner man. Not “I *might*...*if you*...” Just “I *will*.”

- The heart of stone is not assisted; it is replaced.

And the negative counterpart confirms the same truth. In Deuteronomy 29:4, Moses declares: “Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” The inability is not merely moral reluctance—it is the absence of what only God can give. *Until He gives it, it is not possessed. And when He gives it, it is.*

“Turn Us O God”

The cry of Psalm 80 makes the order unmistakable:

“Turn us again, O God... *then* we shall be saved” (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19).

The force is decisive. The psalmist does not say, “We will turn, and then You will save us,” but pleads for God to **cause** the return—and **then** salvation follows. The “then” is the hinge of the text. Divine action is first; saving result follows. The Hebrew verb (*shuv*) carries this causative weight: *bring us back, restore us, cause us to return*. This is not a request for opportunity, but for action. Not assistance, but intervention.

This is precisely the logic carried forward by Christ in John 6:44 and John 6:65: “No one can come to Me *unless* the Father who sent Me draws him,” and again, “no one

can come *unless it has been granted him* from the Father.” The inability is real, and the remedy is not mere polite request but divine action.

- The “drawing” is not external inducement alone, but an inward work that overcomes resistance by changing what the heart sees—and therefore what it wants.

For the will *always* follows the strongest inclination of the heart. If that inclination remains unchanged, no amount of external light will produce saving movement. But when God unites the heart, renews the spirit, and causes the return, the will comes freely, **because it now desires what it once resisted.**

This is why Scripture speaks not merely of invitation, but of creation: light shining out of darkness, hearts of stone replaced with hearts of flesh, the dead made alive. These are not cooperative acts. They are unilateral acts of divine power that bring forth the very response they require.

Faith itself, therefore, is not the independent contribution of man that activates grace, but the fruit of grace that reveals it. It is not the cause of salvation, but the evidence of a heart already awakened and now rightly inclined, *by God*.

Any theology that places the final determination of salvation in the sinner, regardless of the degree or percentage, does not preserve grace, but redefines it by redacting its full dynamic. A “sufficient” work of Christ that awaits human activation is not truly sufficient. If the cross and grace alone does not save, but only makes salvation possible, then something other than Christ and grace alone becomes decisive.

But Scripture will not allow this division.

“Grace” then, in its New Testament meaning, is the dynamic power of God which transforms the sinner on the basis of unmerited mercy in the light of the cross. The same grace that begins the work completes it. The same God who commands light is the One who causes it to shine. The same God who commands us to turn is the One who *turns us*. And the same Christ who said, “It is finished,” did not leave the completion of that work suspended upon the will of man.

Therefore, Sola Gratia is not merely a doctrinal slogan—it is the necessary conclusion of the gospel in which God alone saves by Christ alone – Sola Christus, through faith alone – Sola Fide, to the glory of God alone – Soli Deo Gloria.

- ✚ **Either grace is decisive...and thus, truly “Sola Gratia” – Grace Alone or it is not grace at all.**