

**SAVED BY GRACE ALONE,
THROUGH FAITH ALONE,
IN CHRIST ALONE.**
(Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus)

Pastoral Address

By

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DIOCESE OF THE WEST



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“Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he (sc. James) is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works.” - John Calvin

Preamble

"The Church is reformed and always in need of being reformed according to the Word of God." (Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei). Jodocus van Lodenstein, 1674.

It is my pleasure to welcome all our clergy and laity to the fifth annual Synod of the Anglican Diocese of CANA West – our Diocese.

On your behalf, I welcome our guests, and especially the Rev. Canon David Short, who will be teaching us from the Bible. Canon Short was the Rector under whom I served for six years at St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I am greatly indebted to him for his love, his mentorship, his patience, and most of all, for helping me understand that Christian leadership is, first and foremost, a Bible-preaching and Bible-centered ministry. I learned much from him – especially from his expositional preaching – by taking notes as I listened to him preach. Thank you, David, for joining us at this Synod.

I am grateful to all of you who sacrifice your time, energy, and financial resources to enable this Diocese to do its ministry. Your commitment and labor of love are not, and will not, be in vain. My sincere thanks go to Venerable Myles Calvin, Vice Chancellor Sir Kanu, and my Chancellor, Christopher Milner, as well as to Sir Ron Munden, Sir Charles Napier, and Sir Bill Burton for their dedication, and for the tremendous amount of time they offer in service to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the diocese. To the Primate of ACNA, the Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach, and to the Primate of all Nigeria, the Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas Okoh, I extend my thanks for their support, prayers, and encouragement.

Let me make a point here: The Church of Nigeria is not perfect, but it does one thing right: it is faithful to the gospel and will not compromise her faithfulness to God for a “mess of pottage”! This stance, unfortunately, is fast becoming abnormal in the Anglican Communion.

As a Diocese that is both canonically-connected and committed to the Church of Nigeria, we should be grateful for the privilege of belonging to a Province that calls us to be faithful to the written Word of God in the midst of a world and Communion that is morally and theologically drifting towards apostasy.

Continuing, my sincere gratitude goes to those of you who take the time and make the effort to reach out personally to me and my family. Our lives can be lonely and difficult due to the nature of episcopal ministry. But the Lord strengthens us and has encouraged us by bringing you into our lives to pray for us and support us. Lilian and I are very grateful for you.

Most importantly, I must give all thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for all He has done for me and for all of us in this diocese. To Him be all the glory forever and ever. Amen

This year I will not present a report on the Diocese as I have in years past. Neither will I address the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood that the ACNA College of Bishops is currently deliberating, because our Diocese and the Church of Nigeria are very clear on that issue and have no intention of changing our position. So be at peace!

As many of you know, this year marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The Reformation officially began on October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther challenged the Roman Catholic Church on its dogma regarding indulgences, purgatory, penance, and works-righteousness.

He did this by nailing his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. While Luther had no idea of the impact his challenge would make on the world, his actions changed the course of history and that of the church in Europe and beyond. They unintentionally, yet officially, triggered what is now known as the Protestant Reformation.

We must remember that there had been numerous attempts to reform the Roman Church before the 16th century, but those attempts had always been squelched. According to theological historian and author Jack L. Arnold, "There were groups outside the Roman Church, such as the Albigenses and Waldenses. They opposed the Roman Church and their blood flowed like water in martyrdom. Men such as John Wycliffe (1320-1384), John Huss (1360-1415), and Gerolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) spoke out against the papacy, auricular confession, purgatory, pilgrimages, worship of saints, relics, etc.

Huss and Savonarola were burned at the stake as heretics. Rome herself made some halfhearted attempts to reform at the Councils of Pisa (1409), Constance (1414-1418) and Basel (1431), but these were not successful."

Martin Luther was the instrument used by God to finally initiate a much-needed reformation of the Church.

Anglicanism is a product of this Reformation – our theology, our liturgy, our tradition, and our ethics were all influenced tremendously by the 16th century Reformation. However, modern Anglicanism is losing its grip on the central theology of Continental and English Reformers. Therefore, at this Diocesan Synod, I want to focus our attention on the theological legacy of the Reformation, specifically on the topic of "Salvation by '*grace alone*' through '*faith alone*' in '*Christ alone*'."

Only when we draw on the depths of these truths will our churches and our outreach become effective. And only when we hold on to these truths will the believer's assurance of salvation be strengthened and the ministry and mission of the Church be revived to the glory of God alone.

We have a lot to learn from the Reformers. Unlike many professing Christians today, these men and women of the Reformation era valued the gospel and the glory of God so much that many of them willingly suffered, and some even died, for the privilege of proclaiming, preserving, and passing on the gospel of God.

The "Oxford Martyrs" as they are called, were Anglican Bishops who died for the sake of the gospel. You know them: Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (Archbishop of Canterbury); Bishop Hugh Latimer (Bishop of Worcester); and Bishop Nicholas Ridley (Bishop of London), were burned at the stake in London by Queen Mary Tudor in 1555 - 1556 for upholding the truth of the same gospel that we now believe and preach. We must not take their sacrifices for granted.

By the grace of God, we must resolve to give up our half-hearted, modernistic, post-truth approach to the gospel. We must adopt a robust, self-sacrificing commitment to the apostolic faith as did our Anglican forebears. It is important, therefore, that we pay attention to the truth of the gospel *they* preached because it is now *our* responsibility to pass it on to the next generation -- and possibly at the cost of our lives, our comforts, and/or our rightful privileges.

This is a vital task for the Church and God helping us, we must not fail. It is more than important – it is urgent – to pay heed to this apostolic message recovered during the Reformation, because the Christian Church today (especially the Anglican Communion) has lost sight of these things.

There is a resolute unwillingness among some churches to submit to the authority of the Bible. Consequently, most of the provinces of the Anglican Communion in the West, and in parts of Africa, are on a theological downgrade and hence adrift on the ocean of apostasy. Anglicanism desperately needs renewal and reformation. But, is this even possible? I believe yes, it is possible. How then can Anglicanism be renewed and reformed?

Reforming and Renewing Anglicanism

In order to renew, reform, and revive Anglicanism we must remind ourselves and the Anglican Communion of the two major principles of the Reformation. The first is the formal principle which is “the Primacy of Scripture”. A return to the authority and primacy of the Word of God has been the *sine qua non* of renewals, reformation, and revivals throughout the history of the Church. That was why prominent Dutch preacher and writer

Jodocus van Lodenstein stated clearly in 1674 that, "The Church is reformed and is always in need of being reformed according to the Word of God." ("Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei".) Renewal of the church cannot happen without a return to the written Word of God.

The second principle of the Reformation to which we must return if we are to have renewal is what has been called the "Material Principle", which is "Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone". John Calvin further explained this Material Principle by describing the grace of God as, "the efficient cause" and the faith by which we receive that grace in Christ, "the instrumental cause" of Justification. Here is how John Calvin put it: "*When therefore we are justified, the efficient cause is the mercy (grace) of God, the meritorious [cause] is Christ, and the instrumental [cause] is the word [of God] in connection with faith.*" This is the gospel! We must uphold this gospel deposit against contemporary factors that collude to undermine or dilute it. This was why Paul instructed the young pastor, Timothy, to "Guard the good deposit entrusted to you ... Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 1:14; 2:1-2.

That is what I want to do now. I want to guard "the good deposit" of the Christian Faith by reminding you of, and restating, the gospel of grace so that all of us together can pass it on to the next generation. Here is the gospel: Salvation or justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone! Let us now turn our attention to what that means.

**SAVED BY GRACE ALONE,
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IN CHRIST ALONE.
(Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus)**

"Through Christ alone we are given salvation, blessedness, grace, pardon, and all that makes us in any way worthy in the sight of a righteous God.

– Ulrich Zwingli

"Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace."

– John Wesley

I will begin by reading Ephesians 2:1-10:

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."

Introduction

Twentieth-century writer Dorothy Sayers once said that no one would deny that there is a wide and deep cleavage in Christendom.

She said, "But it (sc. this cleavage) does not run between Catholics and Protestants; it runs between those who believe that salvation is of God and those who believe that salvation is of man."

While that is true, it is important to remind one another that the Reformation that took place approximately five hundred years ago was a result of, and a necessary reaction to, the theological, moral, and ecclesial aberrations of the Roman Catholic Church in the middle ages. These were aberrations that undermined the truth of Scripture, the purity of the gospel, the faith of believers, and the mission of God's church in the world.

The Roman church, according to Dr. Joel Beeke, was characterized by abuses in theology and practice such as commercialization of grace (selling of indulgences to get out of purgatory); simony (selling ecclesiastical positions to the highest bidder); immorality, and hypocritical moralizations, among other miscreancies. The Church was guilty of undermining the authority and primacy of Holy Scripture, of elevating monasticism to a level of super spirituality for superior saints, of usurping the preeminence of the mediation of Christ by exalting the Blessed Virgin and the saints almost to the same level with Christ, and of insisting that "good works" of baptism, penance, pilgrimages, self-flagellations, almsgiving, and fasting, among others, were necessary for justification before God.

The Reformers' response to these theological departures which undermined the gospel of grace settled into five Reformation watchwords or battle cries, centered on the Latin word *solus*, meaning "**alone**". These five *solas* are not adiaphora; rather they constitute the "esse" – the essence or essential truths – of the Christian gospel.

Here are the five *solas* or "esse" of **Protestant Reformation** thought:

- *Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura)*
- *Faith alone (Sola Fide)*
- *Grace alone (Sola gratia)*
- *Christ alone (Solus Christus)*
- *Glory to God alone (Soli Deo Gloria)*
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In contrast, the **Medieval Roman Catholic Church** upheld:

- *Scripture and Tradition*
- *Faith and works*
- *Grace and merit*
- *Christ, Mary, and the intercession of saints*
- *God, saints, and church hierarchy*

Beeke summarizes in these words: "The first of these battle cries deals with the fundamental issue of authority, the middle three deal with the basics of salvation, and the final one addresses worship." These were the issues that led to the Reformation five hundred years ago!

As a matter of fact, the center of the storm during the Reformation was the nature and means of justification. Martin Luther considered justification by faith alone as the material cause of the Reformation because it involved the material or substance of the gospel - what the individual must believe to be saved. And more so, says Luther, "Because if this article [of justification] stands, the church stands; if this article collapses, the church collapses". For Luther, "This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification, is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness." Justification by faith alone became the rallying cry of the Protestant cause, and the main distinction between the Protestant and the medieval Catholic establishment. John Calvin agreed with Luther when he stated, "Justification is the main hinge on which salvation turns." And he said, "Everyone who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must renounce his own."

As early 20th century, Princeton theologian B. B Warfield wrote: "The material principle of the Reformation... was not at first known by the name of justification by faith alone, but it was from the first passionately embraced as renunciation of all human works and dependence on the grace of God alone for salvation... There are two foci around which this gospel revolves: the absolute helplessness of man in sin; the sole efficiency of grace in salvation... All else that Protestantism stood for, in comparison with this, must be relegated to the second rank."

The Reformation debate centered on this because of the **Roman Catholic view of**

Justification (Analytic justification):

- The instrumental cause: baptism

- Infused righteousness
- Grace plus merit
- Faith plus works
- Christ's righteousness plus ours (Inherent righteousness)
- No assurance of salvation

The medieval church had concluded that salvation was by grace and human merit through faith in Christ and good works -- plus the mediation of the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary. They repudiated salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

At the General Council of Trent, the Catholic Church stated in Canon XIV on justification that, "If any one saith that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema (excommunicated)." This is a religion of "heaven helps those who help themselves".

Akin to this mindset is a Persian poem that we were taught in elementary school:

*"God will not seek thy race,
Nor will he ask thy birth;
Alone he will demand of thee,
What hast thou done on earth?"*

This is a religion of human effort. Pelagianism at its worst.

To be clear, the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations that agree with them do not believe that salvation is by human effort alone. They believe that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. But, they disagree with the word "alone" – they don't believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

These forms of Pelagian and semi-Pelagian theologies expressed in the Medieval church and in many churches today, were and are burdensome expressions of Christianity. Together they constitute a false gospel that dishonors God, trivializes Christ and his cross, and exalts human achievement (with some help from God) rather than the graciousness of God in Christ towards us.

For this reason, the Reformers vehemently disagreed with the Medieval Roman church and with similar expressions of such theologies then and today. Here is how the **Reformers viewed Justification (Synthetic Justification):**

- Instrumental cause: faith in Christ alone
- Imputed righteousness
- Alien righteousness - Christ's righteousness alone
- Grace alone
- Faith alone
- Assurance of salvation

Classical Anglicanism concurs with the Reformers on the matter of justification:

Article XI, *Of the Justification of Man*

*"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings; Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith **only** is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."*

As Richard Hooker, one of the premier theologians of the Anglican religious tradition put it, "God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for his worthiness who is believed." And former professor of reformation history at the University of Notre Dame, Philip E. Hughes noted, "This issue of man's justification before God was called by Hooker, 'that grand question, which hangeth yet in controversy between us and the Church of Rome, about the matter of justifying righteousness'".

Hooker asserted that: "As for such as hold, with the Church of Rome, that we cannot be saved by Christ alone without works; they deny the foundation of faith." He went on to say, "The righteousness wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore, we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him."

The works-oriented view of Justification is also contrary to Holy Scripture. Listen to Paul writing to the young pastor, Titus:

*"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the***

Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:3-7

It is evident that there was, and there still is, and there should be, a deep and wide divide between those whose religion is a religion of divine accomplishment in Christ alone through faith alone and those whose religion is that of human achievement plus some help from God, if needed.

Post-Reformation and Contemporary Anglicanism has not escaped the false theology that ravaged the Church in the Middle Ages.

As Australian theologian, author, and priest Michael Jensen has written recently, "In the nineteenth century, it was John Henry Newman (1801-1890) who renewed this opposition to justification by faith alone as an authentic expression of an Anglican doctrine of justification. His influence on subsequent Anglican identity has been profound, and so his opposition to *sola fide* is noteworthy for its impact on successive generations of Anglicans, especially in the Anglo-Catholic movement."

(cf: Newman's 1837 *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*).

He later renounced his Anglican clerical orders, left the Church of England to become a priest and eventually a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church. The current theological conversation amongst Anglicans led by Bishop N. T Wright, former bishop of the Diocese of Durham, on the *New Perspective on Paul* has raised concerns because of what appears to be its theological attacks on the doctrine of Justification by faith alone.

This 500th-year anniversary of the Reformation is an opportune time for us to return to the Biblical Christianity that the Reformers proclaimed. Biblical Christianity is extraordinarily unique among world religions in that it is the only religion that believes that we are wholly saved by "grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone."

This is the message that we desperately need to hear and that our hopeless and helpless world desperately needs to hear. As Jason Helepoulos, author and Associate Pastor of University Reformed Church rightly stated: "Salvation is not realized in seeking for, aspiring to, climbing, or ascending to heaven; it is realized by his grace flowing down."

Before we go any further let me make five clarifications:

First, we are not saved, and nobody has ever been saved, and nobody will ever be saved by grace alone through faith alone. Rather, we are saved and justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! It's a triplet -- a three-legged stool. Someone might say, "Excuse me... I believe that salvation is by Christ alone but not by grace alone through faith alone."

The very moment someone says that, he has denied that salvation is by Christ alone because Christ can only save by grace alone through faith alone.

He does not save by grace, plus faith, plus good works, plus the sacraments, plus on and on and on.

Second, everyone who is saved is saved by God in exactly the same way. Calvinists and non-Calvinists who are saved are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. No one gets saved any other way. We are not saved by faith and our ability to understand the doctrines of grace! A gap in understanding does not enervate the power of God's grace.

That's how gracious God is! Unfortunately, those who deny the "solus" of salvation rob God of the fullness of His glory by attributing God's work of salvation to themselves and others. By so doing they rob themselves of the assurance and joy God has for them; and they fail to ascribe to God the full honor due His name in the world.

Third, we are not saved by the gospel or by believing in reformed theology or by being at the right theological conferences or reading the right theological books or saying the right theological words. No, we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone. We cannot and must not sing the praises of grace or faith or scripture or reformed theology because the marrow of the Reformation, and biblical theology in general, is the glory of God. *God must get all the glory.* No glory must be left for Calvinists or well-meaning "Cal-minians."

Fourth, to be saved is to be rescued primarily from the penalty of sin, which is the wrath of God, by the grace of God, manifested in the atoning sacrifice and perfect obedience of Christ. Salvation is not primarily about rescue from poverty, sickness, and unhappiness. That is God's plan for us in the eternal eschatological future.

God's salvation includes rescue from the power and presence of sin at glorification, rescue from the power of Satan and death, and all the blessings of the new covenant. God's eternal plan of salvation includes: election, regeneration, effectual calling, redemption, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation, and glorification of the believer. All of these proceed out of God's love and grace toward us – we who deserve nothing but eternal wrath.

Fifth, justification is the forensic judicial act of God by which God declares His children righteous and grants us the gift of righteousness based on His grace alone through our faith alone in Christ's merit alone, that is, His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and His perfect obedience. Well known author and lecturer James Boice defined Justification as, "the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone."

And Luther had this to say about justification by faith alone: "This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour." According to the Reformers the only reason why sinners can have any hope of pardon from, acceptance by, and peace with God is because of the good standing of the Son of God which sinners can obtain only by faith in Him and union with Him.

It is important to note the central issue at stake during the Reformation was not whether we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. In the middle ages, almost everyone in Christendom, including the Roman Catholic Church, believed that. Rather, the issue of contention was whether we are saved by grace *alone*, through faith *alone* in Christ *alone* -- because He *alone* can save us by dying to pay our penalty and crediting His righteousness to us.

The word *alone* made, and makes, all the difference. The Bible asserts that we are saved and justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone because salvation and faith are both gifts of God's grace. *And it is a logical impossibility to merit a gift.*

Here is a theological formula that captures the theological differences on Justification:

- a. Faith in Christ + Good Works = Justification (Roman Catholic/Arminianism)
- b. Faith in Christ = Justification - Good Works (Antinomianism)
- c. Faith in Christ = Justification + Good Works (Biblical and Reformed Theology). This is the correct view of Justification in the Bible. Faith alone in Christ alone leads to Justification and good works!

Let us now turn our attention to the meaning, the necessity, and the consequences of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE: *Sola Gratia*

(Ephesians 2:5, 8-8; Deuteronomy 7:6-8; 9:1-6)

We are saved by grace alone excluding human merit - congruent merit (merit “congruous” or “fitting” for God to reward); condign merit (merit so worthy that a just God is obligated to reward it); and supererogatory merit (merit above and beyond the call of duty; the kind of excess merit achieved by saints which can be sold or bought – a “treasury” of merit).

Martin Luther strongly rejected the concept of merit: "These arguments of the Scholastics about the merit of congruence and of worthiness (de merito congrui et condigni) are nothing but vain figments and dreamy speculations of idle folk about worthless stuff. Yet they form the foundation of the papacy, and on them it rests to this very day. For this is what every monk imagines: By observing the sacred rules of my order I can earn the grace of congruence, but by the works I do after I have received this grace I can accumulate a merit

so great that it will not only be enough to bring me to eternal life but enough to sell and give it to others."

Anglican Reformers also repudiated this kind of merit system in **Article XIV, *Of Works of Supererogation:***

"VOLUNTARY works besides, over, and above God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety: for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly, "When ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, we are unprofitable servants."

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, in his *Homily of Salvation*, affirmed that "Our Justification doth come freely by the mere mercy of God (only by the mercy of God); and of so great and free mercy that, whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our Heavenly Father, of his infinite mercy, without any of our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him."

Salvation by grace alone means that we did absolutely nothing to earn or merit salvation. It was freely and sovereignly given to us by God on the meritorious ground of Christ's work alone. Someone may ask questions about our "good works" -- works that some fine people have done.

Here is how the **Articles of Religion** responds to that:

Article XIII, *Of Works before Justification*

"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, for as much as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

We are not and cannot be saved by our past good works, present good works, or future good works -- whether those works are enabled by God's grace (infused righteousness) or not, (as in Pelagian "inherent righteousness"). We are saved by God's grace alone!

What then is Grace?

Grace is the unmerited favor of God granted to us. Baptist Theologian William Newman once put it like this: grace is "the free favor of God ... conferred ... upon the unworthy."

Those who receive grace are not merely helpless, they are unworthy and undeserving of it because they are willfully rebellious and hostile towards God. Grace is everything given to us by God which we do not deserve. How many are those? The answer is everything! Grace is free, sovereign, all-encompassing and costly for God. That is what makes grace amazing!

English Christian leader and Anglican theologian John Stott defines grace as, "God's free and undeserved mercy towards us and faith is the humble trust with which we receive it for ourselves."

Canadian theologian, J. I. Packer noted that Grace "is not an impersonal force, a sort of celestial electricity received like a battery charge by "plugging in" to the sacraments, [it] is a personal activity—God operating in love toward people." Packer continues, "The grace of God is love freely shown toward guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity."

He further stated that, "The word 'grace' thus comes to express the thought of God acting in spontaneous goodness to save sinners: God loving the unlovely, making covenant with them, pardoning their sins, accepting their persons, revealing Himself to them, moving them to response, leading them ultimately into full knowledge and enjoyment of Himself, and overcoming all obstacles to the fulfillment of this purpose that at each stage arise. Grace is election-love plus covenant-love, a free choice issuing in a sovereign work. Grace saves from sin and all evil; grace brings ungodly men to true happiness in the knowledge of their Maker."

And finally, Packer said, "Grace in the New Testament is not, then, an impersonal energy automatically switched on by prayers and sacraments, but the heart and hand of the living almighty God. Grace is certainly found in the church, for it is grace that creates the church, but grace is in no sense subject to the church's control. God's love is free, and it is God himself who chooses whom he will save."

Grace is pardon and power freely given to us by God in Christ.

What does it mean to be saved or justified by grace alone?

First, it means that God does not save us because of any inherent goodness – a divine spark he sees in us presently or potentially in the future. And neither does he save us because of any good works we have done in the past, or are doing in the present, or will do in the future.

Second, it means that God saved us and saves us because he loves us and wants to grant us favor freely.

Third, it means that everything God grants to us in salvation is a favor that we do not deserve, and can never deserve or merit, by anything we can do or are enabled to do by God. The blessings of election, regeneration, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, redemption, perseverance, and glorification are all gifts of grace which God has freely bestowed upon his people on the meritorious work of Christ shown in His perfect obedience and sacrificial atoning, penal sacrifice on the Cross. We receive the riches of God's grace by faith. That faith *is a gift* of God's enabling grace.

Fourth, it means that our salvation is not based on the infusion of Christ's righteousness in us through baptism. Rather, our salvation is based on the penalty-paying death of Christ and the imputation, or crediting/giving, of Christ's righteousness to us and received by faith alone.

In my research for this address, I found this uncredited quote: "Grace is God's Sovereign, free, and unmerited favor given to sinners who merit nothing but eternal wrath. The death

of Christ is the meritorious ground/cause of salvation. To believe in salvation by grace alone is simply to acknowledge that the Bible teaches that the totality of our salvation is a gift of grace from God. As it says in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. It is the acknowledgement that salvation from the wrath of God is based on God's grace and mercy alone and not on anything good in us."

God's grace alone can do what nothing else can do. Good advice, moral living, and the law are not able to help us in our predicaments. Spiritually dead people cannot respond to religious lectures to behave well for the obvious reason: they are dead! What dead people need is spiritual awakening at regeneration which comes only by unmerited favor of God before they can do anything that is acceptable to God – starting with the right motive and righteous position to give God what He wants and how He wants it.

Grace is not an independent spiritual quantity that exists in and by itself. Rather, grace is unmerited favor granted to us by God in and through Christ. There is no saving grace outside of Christ. It is Christ who saves and justifies, not grace or faith. His grace is overflowing and *piling* up grace!

In John 1:14-17 we read:

"14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

16 For from his fullness we have all received, *grace upon grace*.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

What did God accomplish in us by His grace, love, mercy, and kindness through Christ? (Ephesians 2: 4-6, 8)

Notice in verses 5 and 8 he says, "by grace you have been saved"

- he made us alive with Christ (v. 5)

- he raised us up with him (v. 6a)

- he made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (v. 6b)

This is by no means exhaustive because the Lord has done more for us. It is by his grace - God's free and sovereign favor to the undeserving - that we are chosen, regenerated, called, forgiven, justified, sanctified, adopted, sealed, preserved, and glorified (Eph. 1:3-14).

And as Paul the apostle wrote in Romans 5:1-11, at our justification Christ grants to believers peace and reconciliation with God, permanent access and standing in the sphere of grace, the hope of glory, the outpouring of divine love through the gift of the Holy Spirit, salvation from future wrath, and a reason to rejoice and boast in our God, our hope, and our suffering for Him.

"You live in His grace, you live by His grace, you work by His grace, you are fruitful by His grace, and you are everything in His grace." -- E. Stanley Jones

SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE: *Sola Fide* (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:21-26; Psalms 32:1-11).

We receive salvation through the instrument of faith alone, not through the sacrament or ordinance of baptism, penance, or anything else plus sprinkles of implicit faith. Salvation through faith alone means that we receive salvation through trusting Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the Cross.

Article XI, *Of the Justification of Man*

"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

Archbishop Cranmer wrote: "This proposition that we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works is spoken in order to take away clearly all merit of works, as being insufficient to deserve our justification at God's hand; and thereby most plainly to express the weakness of man and the goodness of God, the great infirmity of ourselves and the might and power of God, the imperfectness of our own works and the most abundant grace of our Savior Christ; and thereby wholly to ascribe the merit and deserving of our Justification unto Christ only and his most precious blood-shedding". He went on to say that "Justification is not the office of man but of God; for man cannot justify himself by his own works, neither in part nor in the whole..."

According to Calvinist theologian, pastor, and author R. C. Sproul: "Protestant theology affirms that faith is the instrumental cause of justification in that faith and the means by

which the merits of Christ are appropriated to us. Roman Catholic theology teaches that baptism is the primary instrumental cause of justification and that the sacrament of penance is the secondary, restorative cause. (Roman Catholic theology views penance as the second plank of justification for those who have made shipwreck of their souls—those who have lost the grace of justification by committing mortal sin.) The sacrament of penance requires works of satisfaction by which human beings achieve congruous merit for justification. The Roman Catholic view affirms that justification is by faith, but denies that it is by faith alone, adding good works as a necessary condition."

What does it mean to be saved by faith alone?

Salvation by faith alone means that "God's pardon for guilty sinners is granted to and received through faith alone, excluding all "works". All mankind is fallen and sinful, under the curse of God, and incapable of saving itself from God's wrath and curse. But God, based on the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, alone (*solus Christus*), grants sinners judicial pardon, or justification, which is received solely through faith.

Faith is passive, merely receiving Christ and all his benefits, among which benefits are the active and passive righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ's righteousness is attributed by God to the believing sinner so that the divine verdict and pardon of the believing sinner is based not upon anything in the sinner, not even faith itself, but upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness alone, which are received through faith alone." (*Wikipedia*)

As Bishop Hugh Latimer put it, "Faith is the hand wherewith we receive his (Christ's) benefits." Faith is the instrumental means of salvation - the means by which we receive the grace of God shown us in Christ.

Robert Sproul put it well: "‘Justification by faith alone’ is merely shorthand for ‘justification by the righteousness of Christ alone’. His merit, and only his merit, is sufficient to satisfy the demands of God’s justice. It is precisely this merit that is given to us by faith. Christ is our righteousness. God clothes his filthy creatures with the coat of Christ’s righteousness. This is the very heart of the gospel, expressed not only in the New Testament but in the Old as well."

What is the essential nature of saving faith? Dr. James Packer said that saving faith is "self-abandoning trust in the person and work of Jesus." Philip Melanchthon, in his book "Loci Communes Theologici" published in 1521, wrote that saving faith is composed of three vital elements – information (*notitia*); intellectual assent (*assensus*); and personal trust (*fiducia*) in Christ – because through his obedience and sacrificial death he saved us who believe from eternal wrath. Through this faith he justifies, pardons, accepts us as righteous, adopts us as his children, sanctifies us, empowers us, preserves us, and glorifies us among other blessings.

Saving faith is a working, transforming, lively faith that leads to works of obedience to God. R. C. Sproul wrote that saving faith is a "...vital or living faith (*fides viva* as Luther called it). Living faith produces real works. If no works follow from our profession of faith, this proves that our faith is not alive, but is what Calvin called an ‘imaginary semblance’."

The Necessity of salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

Why is salvation by grace alone through faith alone?

First, that is what the Bible teaches. (Ephesians 2: 8-9):

*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.

Paul states it positively: grace, salvation and faith are *gifts of God* (v. 8); and negatively they are "not of your own doing" (v. 8), and "not a result of works (v. 9)." It could not be any clearer than expressed in those words.

Robert Sproul wrote that: "Considerable debate has ensued regarding the meaning of the first sentence. What is the antecedent for the word "that" ("this"- verse 8 in this version): grace, saved, or faith? The rules of Greek syntax and grammar demand that the antecedent of "that" be the word faith. Paul is declaring what every Reformed person affirms, that faith is a gift from God. Faith is not something we conjure up by our own effort, or the result of the willing of the flesh. Faith is a result of the Spirit's sovereign work of regeneration. It is no accident that this statement concludes a passage that begins with Paul's declaration that we have been "quickened" or "made alive" while we were in a state of "spiritual death."

I am inclined to agree with John Stott's inclusive interpretation of the text. He argued that the word "this" in verse 8 refers to all of it - grace, saved, and faith. They are all gifts of God. None of it is our doing! You cannot work for a gift. A gift is not a reward or a debt. If it is a

gift - freely given by God – then we could not work for it. All we need to do is to receive it gladly, be grateful and respond in joyful obedience to God, the giver.

Here are other passages in the Bible that teach that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone:

Rom. 4:2-5: *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness."*

Luke 18:10-14: *Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.*

Luke 23:40-43: *But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'*

John 6:28-29: *Then they said unto him, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.'*

Acts 10:43: *Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 16:31: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.*

Romans 3:28: *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Romans 11:6: *And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

Galatians 2:16: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

Galatians 2:21: *I do not nullify the grace of God: for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

Galatians 3:1-3; Galatians 3:9-14; Galatians 3:21-25: *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ... So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.*

Galatians 5:4-5: *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

Philippians 3:9: *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

Titus 3:5: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

James 2:10: *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

Second, our human condition is radically depraved and morally incapacitated.

Article X, Of Free-Will

"The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

Here is Martin Luther on the fact that everyone outside of Christ is crippled by sin and having wills that are in bondage:

"Original sin is in us like our beard. We are shaved today and look clean; tomorrow our beard has grown again, nor does it cease growing while we remain on earth. In like manner, original sin cannot be extirpated from us; it springs up in us as long as we live." He added, "I confess that mankind has a free will, but it is to milk kine, to build houses, etc., and no further."

Both Article X and Luther are simply echoing what the Bible teaches about our human condition which is this: we are dead in sin and already under the sentence of eternal death and hence incapable of doing any "work" that is good enough to save ourselves from God's just punishment for our heinous sins: Ephesians 2:1-3

"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.

Therefore, 1) we are dead in sins and trespasses (verse 1-2a) and hence, morally incapable of doing anything to save ourselves - moral depravity and moral inability dog our steps relentlessly; 2) we are enslaved by the world, the flesh and the devil (verse 2b-3a); and 3) we were condemned and under wrath (verse 3b).

Human beings are spiritually dead, disobedient, enslaved, and deserving of God's wrath. It is triple bondage - bondage to the flesh, the world, and the devil. Man, at his best, is stuck in a dead-end cul-de-sac! There is nothing he can do to help himself.

If indeed we are spiritually dead, as the Bible teaches, it becomes evident that any teaching that tells us that we can be saved by good works or by trying harder, praying more, obeying more, seeking God more by fasting, self-flagellation, and self-visualization is totally unhelpful, frustrating, and false. Dead, disobedient, and enslaved people are incapable of helping themselves. Dead people do NOT need moral guidance and commands, they need spiritual resurrection (regeneration) and renewal in order to be able to believe and obey God.

Our situation and condition before God is worse than we realize. Look at Romans 5: 6-11:

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die -

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Human beings outside of Christ are dead, disobedient, weak, and ungodly. They are sinners, they are enemies of God, and they deserve God's wrath! This was why Richard Hooker, a 16th-century English priest and theologian exclaimed, "The best things we do

have *something* in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?" Hence, "We dare not call God to a reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books."

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, because we are totally depraved and morally incapable of helping ourselves.

Here is our Lord Jesus Christ and Paul the apostle reminding us of our spiritual inability to turn to God or to please God outside of Christ:

"43 Jesus answered them, 'Do not grumble among yourselves.

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'." John 6:43-44

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

"11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:11-

13

"7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:7-8.

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14

As I was preparing for this address, I found this uncredited quote which I will share with you: "One reason so many want to reject this important doctrine is that they do not want to accept what the Bible clearly teaches about the basic condition of human nature since the fall of Adam. The Bible says that our hearts are 'deceitful' and 'desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9, NKJV) and that 'there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God'. (Romans 3:10-11).

Rather than acknowledge our total helplessness and hopelessness apart from the grace of God, most people want to believe that they have a role to play in their salvation. Western culture is saturated with the idea that we are 'masters of our own destiny' and 'captains of our souls'. The idea that we are without any hope apart from—and based solely on—the grace of God is foreign to our way of thinking. Sadly, it is also foreign to the way the gospel is often presented—as a plea to man to make a 'decision for Christ' rather than a command to 'repent and believe'."

It is important to point out again that because of our total depravity and inability, we have nothing to offer God because "our righteousness is like filthy rags", as the Bible teaches. The only righteousness that is righteousness before God and that is acceptable to him is perfect righteousness because He is a perfect God. It should now be obvious to us that we cannot help ourselves. Our only hope of salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!

As J. I. Packer reminds us, "To the New Testament writers, grace is a wonder. Their sense of man's corruption and demerit before God, and of the reality and justice of His wrath against sin, is so strong that they find it simply staggering that there should be such a thing as grace at all – let alone grace that was so costly to God as the grace of Calvary."

Third, the absolute perfections of God's nature.

God's perfect holiness and perfect justice require that sin be punished by death. In light of this our inherent sinfulness and consequent death penalty make it impossible for us to obey God satisfactorily, satisfy the justice of God by so doing, and save ourselves. God's absolutely perfect nature and our horrendous sinful condition make it abundantly clear that we can only be saved by God's unmerited favor alone - grace. God's justice is based on His perfect holiness of character and being, hence he who breaks one law is guilty of breaking the WHOLE law!

"For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." James 2:10.

Salvation by obedience to the Law is a logical impossibility as perfection in obedience to the Law is required by a perfect God. Sinners cannot perfectly obey God. Consequently, salvation can only be grace alone - unmerited favor. And because God is perfectly gracious there is hope for us!

The apostle Paul captures that in Ephesians 2:4-8

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"

Notice how Paul describes God's disposition towards us and his actions by which he saved us: his love (v. 4); his mercy (v. 4); his grace (v. 5, 8); the riches of his grace and kindness (v. 7); and his gift (v. 8). We are not made alive and saved because of anything in us - our devotion, faithfulness, godliness, almsgiving, and activity in ministry - but because of the riches of his grace, kindness, mercy, and love!

This grace of God is not a substance, not a magic potion or fairy dust or some force discharged by the church through a priest or the sacraments. Rather, God's saving grace is found in Christ alone - he is the embodiment of divine grace! As Kanishka Raffel, the Anglican Dean of St. Andrew's in Sydney, Australia put it, "God's grace has flesh; God's grace is incarnate. Verse 5: *God made us alive with Christ*; verse 6: *we have been raised and seated with Christ*; verse 7: *God expressed his kindness to us in Christ Jesus*. We know nothing of God's grace apart from Christ, it is only 'with Christ' and 'in Christ' that we know God's grace. That is why there is no salvation outside of Christ; that is why salvation is not from us but a gift of God; that is why salvation is not by works so that no one can boast. We are saved by the power of God's grace not by works; by what God does not by what we do, but because God helps the helpless and the hopeless, not those who help themselves; not by our free will

but by the free grace of God, not because we tried to show our worthiness while we were dead in transgression. And the faith that unites us to Christ and all that God has done in Christ - even that is not a work but a gift, not a deserving but a receiving. Faith is no boast; faith is but an empty hand. God does not reward the faith he sees; our faith receives what God has done."

It is all from God through Christ. And because it is all from God, there is no room for boasting, self-righteousness, self-loathing, arrogance, or despair.

By grace we have been chosen unconditionally and sovereignly; by grace we have been irresistibly drawn to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit who effectually calls us and regenerates us; by grace we have been given the ability to believe; by grace we have been justified and sanctified; by grace God preserves us and enables us to persevere; and by grace we do good works. Grace trains us to live godly (Titus 2:11). Everything we receive from God is a gift of grace through Christ our Lord.

Fourth, the perfect obedience of Christ and his atoning sacrifice are perfect satisfaction for the sins of the whole world - Solus Christus

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone *in Christ alone* because Christ Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly and his atoning sacrifice is “full, perfect, and SUFFICIENT sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” as the Anglican Book of Common Prayer states in the Holy Communion service.

Why would Christ, the Son of God die for us if we could save ourselves by our moral effort? Was the sacrifice of God through his Son so inadequate that God needs our good works to supplement the imperfections, the inability, and inadequacy of perfect and omnipotent God? The idea of supplemental good works raises questions about the perfection of God and his work.

If we need our good works to supplement His sacrifice, the question arises as to how much works is needed! The fact of the matter however, is that we have nothing to offer that is acceptable to God. As the prophet Isaiah said, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteous deeds are as filthy rags" Isaiah 64:6. There is no spiritual *health* in us! That was why Christ had to do it for us. He paid it all. It is sufficient and it is finished!

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1-2

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss leader of the Reformation in the 16th century, said it well, "Through **Christ alone** we are given salvation, blessedness, grace, pardon, and all that makes us in any way worthy in the sight of a righteous God."

The effects or consequences of God's grace and saving faith in the life of the believer: New Covenant blessings and transformation.

First, we are set free completely and fully pardoned.

When we believe in Christ as our one and only Savior and Lord we receive eternal life, justification, pardon, peace with God, adoption as children, gift of righteousness, the Holy Spirit, glorification, and lasting freedom from divine wrath and Satan's power; from the hopeless necessity of trying to commend ourselves to God or to earn God's love by perfect obedience to the Law; from the dominion of sin; from bondage to fear; and we are freed to serve Christ in "holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives." God in His grace grants the believer the fullness of the riches of His grace.

J. I. Packer writes, "Paul several times uses the metaphor of wealth, speaking of God as 'rich in mercy' (ibid; cf. Rom. 10: 12), and of 'the riches of his grace' (Eph. 1: 7; 2: 7), and of 'the riches of his glory' (Eph. 3: 16; cf. Eph. 1: 18), and of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' (Eph. 3: 8).

"What is this 'wealth' of benefit which comes to men by the grace of God in Christ? There are four focal points in Paul's analysis of it: redemption, regeneration, election and preservation."

We receive pardon, peace, freedom, eternal life, adoption, glorification, and more when we believe in Christ.

Second, we are transformed and granted power to do the good works of obedience (Eph. 2:10; 1 John 2-3; Titus 2:11-15; Romans 6; James 2)

When we experience the grace of God in Christ, we are not only justified, we are also regenerated, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit our Lord Jesus begins to change our behavior because that is why he came into the world - to save us from the penalty and power and eventually from the presence of sin at glorification.

The apostle John wrote to the Christian church reminding us of this:

5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:5-10

Also:

3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 Whoever says, 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 2:3-4

Justification through the experience of God's grace leads to sanctification. If it doesn't, then the person has not truly been justified. That was the contention of James in his famous passage in James 2 which Martin Luther wrongly called the "straw epistle":

"14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. James 2:14-17, 24, 26

Paul the apostle agrees with James that genuine saving grace and faith in Christ inevitably leads to obedience:

"1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"

2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:1-2, 15-18 (cf: Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:17- 5:1-17)

The gospel is inherently life changing. A true encounter with God and His gospel will naturally, radically, and supernaturally change one's heart to reflect His righteousness in practice — not permit more unrighteousness.

Bishop J. C. Ryle in his book "Old Paths" identified the following marks as "*marks by which true belief in Christ may be discerned and known - he has peace and hope, he has a new heart, he is a holy person in heart and life, he works godly works, he overcomes the world, he has inward testimony of salvation, and he has special regard in all his religion to the person of Christ.*"

Charles Spurgeon, an influential 19th-century Baptist preacher, in his sermon "The Obedience of Faith," said, "*The more of faith in Him you have, the more of obedience to Him will you manifest.*"

R. C. Sproul joins the chorus on this: "*We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. True faith always yields the fruit of obedience to one degree or another.*" He continued, "*The faith that justifies is a living faith, not an empty profession of faith. Faith is a personal trust that clings to Christ alone for salvation. Saving faith is also a penitent faith that embraces Christ as both Savior and Lord.*"

Unfortunately, through the centuries of the Christian church beginning in the first century, some Christians have abused or misunderstood God's grace as a basis for continuing in sin - antinomian tendencies. Antinomianism is a heresy that teaches that Christians have no obligation to obey God's Word as rule of life.

The theological formula for Antinomianism is *Faith = Justification - Good Works*. Both Paul (see Romans 6) and Jude warned against that: "*For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord.*" Jude 1:4.

Martin Luther, who is commonly misunderstood as one who was strictly concerned with faith as a momentary event involving the transfer of trust, apart from a subsequent lifetime of obedient works, did not preach such errant antinomianism. He made statements that were not clear and were misconstrued by unstable Christians, then and now.

However, Luther, in his "Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans", written in 1522 for inclusion in his German translation of the Bible, summarizes and clarifies certain key words in Romans, such as "justification," "faith," "sin," and "law". Describing faith, Luther counters accusations during his time that the Reformation doctrine of justification is indifferent to good works in the Christian life. He contended that although justification is by faith alone, true faith is living and always results in good works.

Here is Luther on saving faith:

"Faith is not the human notion and dream that some people call faith. When they see that no improvement of life and no good works follow—although they can hear and say much

about faith—they fall into the error of saying, ‘Faith is not enough; one must do works in order to be righteous and be saved.’ This is because when they hear the gospel, they get busy and by their own powers create an idea in their heart which says, ‘I believe’; they take this then to be a true faith. But, as it is a human figment and idea that never reaches the depths of the heart, nothing comes of it either, and no improvement follows.

“Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1: 12-13). It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of, and confidence in, God’s grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him this grace. Thus, it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire. Beware, therefore, of your own false notions and of the idle talkers who imagine themselves wise

enough to make decisions about faith and good works, and yet are the greatest fools. Pray God that he may work faith in you. Otherwise you will surely remain forever without faith, regardless of what you may think or do."

Anglican Reformers concurred with Luther.

Archbishop Cranmer in his *Homily of Faith* wrote, "Deceive not yourselves therefore, thinking that you have faith in God, or that you love God, or do trust in him, or do fear him, when you live in sin; for then your ungodly and sinful life declareth the contrary, whatsoever you say or think." He added, "Thy deeds and works must be an open testimonial of thy faith; otherwise thy faith, being without good works, is but the devil's faith, the faith of the wicked, a fantasy of faith, and not a true Christian faith. Therefore, as you profess the name of Christ, good Christian people, let no such fantasy and imagination of faith at any time beguile you; but sure, of your faith: try it (test it) by your living"

Article XII, Of Good Works

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's Judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

Bishop John Jewel makes a similar point. In this sermon he said: "Good brethren, let us consider that as many of us as say we know God's way, we know God's word and his gospel: If virtue follow not, if honest conversation and upright living follow not this our profession, we shame God and dishonor his holy name. *'They say that they know God,' saith St.*

Paul [Titus 1:16], they say that they know his holy word and gospel; *'but in their deeds, they deny God,'* they deny his gospel.

"... therefore, if we have the word of God as a song to delight our ears, if we turn the truth of God into riot and wantonness, if we confess God with our lips and deny him in our deeds, if we say we know God's law, we know his commandments, and yet live not thereafter [accordingly], we do not praise God and confess his name, but we shame God and dishonor his holy name, we cause the people to think evil of God's word and slander his gospel.

"And this is the cause why the common sort of people judge that not to be the gospel which is this day preached and taught unto them; because such as profess the gospel live not after the gospel; because such as say they know God's way walk not in God's way.

"We are the children of God, the brethren of Christ, and heirs of the everlasting kingdom of God, we are Christian men, we profess God's gospel: let us therefore remember that we must walk as becometh the servants of Christ; we must live like the professors of God's holy gospel.

"This day we have heard God's gospel preached unto us, this day we have learned out of the word of God that if we be Christians we should live like Christians; if we be the children of God we should live as becometh the children of God, without envy, without hatred, without strife or malice.

"...Let us show ourselves in our works to be the children of God and the brethren of Christ; let us not show ourselves Christians in name, and not in deed; let us not love in word alone, but in deed and in verity [truth]; let us not requite evil with evil, one mischief with another, but let us (according to St. Paul's rule [Rom. 12:21]) 'overcome evil with good,' hatred with love, and so fulfill the law of God."

John Calvin strongly opposed Antinomianism: "It is faith alone that justifies, but the faith that justifies can never be alone. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ not only justifies us by covering all our faults and sins but also sanctifies us by his Spirit, so that the two things - the free forgiveness of sins and reformation to a holy life - cannot be dissevered and separated from each other."

Calvin also noted, "Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he (James 2) is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works."

Scotch reformation theologian John Murray: "Faith alone justifies but a justified person with faith alone would be a monstrosity which never exists in the kingdom of grace. Faith works itself out through love (Gal. 5:6). And Faith without works is dead (James 2:17-20)."

John Piper, American Calvinist Baptist pastor and author:

"Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin. Grace is power, not just pardon."

R. C. Sproul: "The relationship of faith and good works is one that may be distinguished but never separated... if good works do not follow from our profession of faith, it is a clear indication that we do not possess justifying faith. The Reformed formula is, 'We are justified by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone'.

"At issue, here is the question of genuine faith. The Reformers taught that 'justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. True faith is never alone. It always manifests itself in works. Works that flow out of faith, however, are in no way the ground of our justification. They contribute nothing of merit before God. The only ground or basis of our justification is the merit of Christ. Nor is faith itself a meritorious work or the ground of our justification. Faith is a gift of God's grace, so it possesses no merit of its own. Like James, Luther opposed antinomianism. Saving faith is not dead. It is a vital or living faith (*fides viva*). Live faith produces real works. If no works follow from our profession of faith, this proves that our faith is not alive, but is what Calvin called an 'imaginary semblance'."

What kind of good works does free grace and genuine faith in Christ elicit?

Genuine faith in Christ does not lead to pagan and self-centered forms of "good works" such as teaching that Christians must have short hair, avoid dancing and smoking, engage in penitential and ascetic self-immolation and other actions that are contrary to Scripture. Many false doctrines of sanctification and Good works have been propagated and espoused by some fanatical Christians over the centuries. Scripture envisions good works as actions,

attitudes, and behaviors that are commanded by God in the Bible under the authority of Christ, especially as explicated in the New Testament.

According to Dutch Reformed theologian, Herman Bavinck, "Good works in the strict sense are those done out of true faith, in conformity with God's law, and to his glory.

The virtues of the pagans are not good works. It is out of faith working through love that believers seek to do God's will as expressed in the Ten Commandments."

What do good works look like? Bishop J. C. Ryle identified having a new heart, living a holy life in heart and life, doing godly works, and overcoming the world and the desires of the flesh as "marks by which true belief in Christ may be discerned and known".

According to Jason Helepoulos the characteristics of those who have been saved by grace alone, "should include: gratitude to God, love for God, joy, humility, faithful obedience to Christ, serving and doing good in response to God's grace, lack of self-righteousness, free admission of sinfulness, sorrow over sin, lack of judgmentalism, and a desire to share the good news with all."

Good works include caring for the poor and the needy, self-control, generosity, giving to the work of God, praying for others, sexual purity, forgiving those who offended you, respecting and following the godly guidance of your pastors and spiritual leaders, apologizing when you're wrong, and much more.

Paul the apostle, in Galatians 5:22-24, delineates for us the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a believer who is controlled by the Spirit. And in Colossians 3-4, Ephesians 4-5 and Romans 6, 12-15, he tells us how Christians ought to conduct themselves in a way worthy of our calling. There is no scintilla of doubt in the New Testament that Christians should live a life of obedience to God in accordance with Scripture.

Let me conclude this section with a word from Paul, the apostle of grace:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing SALVATION for all people, TRAINING US TO RENOUNCE UNGODLINESS and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:11-15.

Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's grace. As John says in John 1: 16: "*Out of his fullness we have received grace upon grace!*" He truly saves and sanctifies. Justification is not a legal fiction and neither is salvation a figment of our imagination. It is a divine work that truly saves us, changes us, and glorifies us in eternity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

As we approach the conclusion of this Synod address, let me reiterate: the Bible teaches that salvation and justification are by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. So what are the *real* implications for us?

First, this truth is good news and needs to affect and inform our personal and corporate worship, preaching, and hymnody.

Dr. Jim Packer used to tell us at Regent College in Vancouver, "Theology is for Doxology!"

The message of Grace is the message about an extraordinary loving God. A God who has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The appropriate response is praise, worship, and thanksgiving to God.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1, God has given us all these spiritual blessings "*for the praise of his glory*". He deserves our praise, and our preaching and hymns -- and praying and worship should embody this gospel.

Second, this truth should affect the way we do evangelism.

Dr. Packer describes the foolishness of the anxious-bench, frenetic and self-reliant evangelism that has now morphed into the seeker-sensitive, attractional church movement: "It is right to recognize our responsibility to engage in aggressive evangelism. It is right to desire the conversion of unbelievers. It is right to want one's presentation of the gospel to be as clear and forcible as possible. If we preferred that converts should be few and far between, and did not care whether our proclaiming of Christ went home or not, there would be something wrong with us. But it is not right when we take it on us to do more than God has given us to do. It is not right when we regard ourselves as responsible for securing converts, and look to our own enterprise and techniques to accomplish what only God can accomplish. To do that is to intrude ourselves into the office of the Holy Spirit, and to exalt ourselves as the agents of the new birth. And the point that we must see is this: only by

letting our knowledge of God's sovereignty control the way in which we plan, and pray, and work in his service, can we avoid becoming guilty of this fault. For where we are not consciously relying on God, there we shall inevitably be found relying on ourselves. And the spirit of self-reliance is a blight on evangelism. Such, however, is the inevitable consequence of forgetting God's sovereignty in the conversion of souls."

This truth is good news and we should proclaim it with passion and joy and confidence knowing that our God will accomplish His purpose of salvation in the lives of his elect through his Word and by the Holy Spirit. The Lord doesn't need our gimmicks and theological compromise to do His work. His Word will do it through us and by His Spirit. Let us have confidence in the Bible, my brothers and sisters!

Third, this truth of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone should guide the way we disciple people, counsel them, console them, relate to one another, and relate to the world. In other words, we need to allow this truth to be in the driver's seat of our lives, relationships and ministry - grace, mercy, love, kindness, truth, and faith in Christ *oozing out of* us to others.

This therefore excludes legalism-arminian, liberal, or reformed mutations of legalism, the arrogance of being in the reformed camp and puritan hood, and the self-confidence that comes from theological correctness among other anomalies. Our boasting, assurance and spiritual posture must come from the free salvation we find in our gracious Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ -- and nowhere else.

Fourth, we need to be on our guard against falling into the too-easy trap of living and preaching antinomianism and spiritual quietism - that is justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone MINUS works, thinking it is Reformed Theology. The disregard for grateful obedience in the Christian life is neither Reformed Theology nor biblical teaching. Let's call it what it is: *heresy*.

Here is R. C. Sproul: "For Rome, justification is the result of faith plus works. In Reformed Theology, justification is the result of faith alone, a faith that always produces works. Antinomianism teaches justification by faith minus works. Reformed Theology rejects both the Roman and the antinomian views."

He continued, "Our sanctification begins the moment we have faith and are justified. We must remember that a justified person is a changed person. One who has real faith is regenerate and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The effect of this change is not only necessary and inevitable, but immediate. If no fruit follows, then no faith is present. If no faith is present, then there is no justification."

John Stott also noted, "Some critics always thought this (sc that believers remain passive and inert in salvation) and supposed that Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace alone actually encourages us to continue in sin. They are entirely mistaken. Good works are indispensable to salvation - not as its ground or means, however, but as its consequence and evidence."

The way to avoid antinomianism is not to become legalistic or preach faith and good works.

Rather, it is to teach the whole counsel of God which is the gospel of saving and sanctifying grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone – the Christ who changes those who truly turn to him in repentance and faith.

Teaching the whole counsel of God requires us to remind ourselves and to exhort believers to live a life of holiness and obedience as Paul does in all his epistles. Paul did not leave exhortation to holy living out of his preaching due to fear of legalism. Instead, the Holy Spirit led Paul to preach salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and to exhort believers to, "work out your (their) salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). Paul insists that the Christian life is a life of continued faith and grace-driven obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. For instance, in Titus chapter 2:1ff, he admonishes Titus to teach believers to live holy as a result of God's saving and sanctifying grace.

As noted earlier, Anglican Reformers were very insistent on the importance of holy living and good works in the Christian life and so should we be. Why? Paul answers, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10. This is God's will and design in and for us.

In his Letter to Christians in Thessalonica, Paul wrote:

1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 *that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,*
5 *not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;*
6 *that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these*
things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.
7 *For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*
8 *Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*
9 *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been*
taught by God to love one another,
10 *for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers,*
to do this more and more,
11 *and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed*
you,
12 *so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.*
1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (see also: Romans 12-16; Galatians 5-6; Ephesians 4-6; Philippians 2-4; Colossians 3-4; 1&2 Peter, James, Jude).

Grace and Rewards

Does God reward his children for doing what he enables them to do by his grace? The answer is a resounding YES! While it is imperative that we must maintain and defend and proclaim this true gospel of free grace, we must not lose sight of the fact that God in his grace, and as a result of His grace, will reward us for our good works which He enabled in us so that all glory eventually goes to Him.

R. C. Sproul explains: "Though our good works do not merit salvation, they are the basis upon which God promises to distribute rewards in heaven. Our entrance into the kingdom of God is by faith alone. Our reward in the kingdom will be according to our good works, which is, as Augustine noted, a case of God's gracious crowning of His own gifts." (See Matthew 25.)

Herman Bavinck, in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, sheds more light on the reward for Good Works: "He (Jesus) even repeatedly presents the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as a reward (Matt. 19:29; 25:34, 46) that is already stored up in heaven now (5:12; 6:20; 19:21; Luke 6:23) and will be distributed at the resurrection (14:14). And that reward will be paid for all sorts of works: for enduring persecution and disgrace (Matt. 5:10–12), loving one's enemies (5:46), giving alms (6:4), perseverance (10:22), confessing Jesus's name (10:32), service to his disciples (10:41–42), giving up everything and leaving it behind (19:21, 29), working in the vineyard (20:1–16), faithfulness in one's vocation (24:45–47), careful management of the goods entrusted to us (25:14–30), mercy toward the disciples of Jesus (25:32–46), and so forth. There is therefore no doubt whatever that Jesus uses the idea of reward as an incentive to spur his disciples toward faithfulness and perseverance in the pursuit of their calling. But he stated with equal forcefulness that those who do something to show off to others have already lost their reward from God (6:2, 5, 16); that the reward, which consists in the kingdom of God, far exceeds in magnitude all the labor and toil we have given it (5:46; 19:29; 20:1ff.; 25:21–23; Luke 12:33); that righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life are benefits bestowed by God (Matt. 6:33; 26:28; Mark 10:30; Luke 1:77; 24:47), not to the righteous but to the poor in spirit (Matt. 5:1ff., 9:13; 18:3, 11; and so forth); that believers themselves view and receive these benefits as something that comes to them undeserved

(25:37ff.); that they are unprofitable servants who only did what they were supposed to do (Luke 17:10); that the reward depends on God's free disposition (Matt. 20:14–15); that for all participants in the kingdom of heaven and its benefits this reward is the same (20:1–15); and finally that this kingdom is not purely a state of happiness consisting in external blessings but includes being a child of God and having purity of heart (5:8, 9, 45, 48, and so forth)."

The Lord will reward you for doing what He commands and enables you do so that you give Him all the glory.

Application

I will conclude by asking you two vital questions:

First, are you still trusting in yourself and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps as the way of salvation? In other words, are you exalting human ability, burdening believers, and dishonoring God in your lifestyle and preaching by encouraging people to help God in their salvation instead of receiving His gracious offer of salvation through Christ?

If so, I have good news for you - God is still gracious and wants to give you rest and salvation. Turn to Him and rest in His amazing grace granted us through faith alone in Christ alone and you will find joy and peace for your weary soul and a new strength to serve without fear.

Second, have you experienced God's regenerating grace and is there any evidence (faith and good works) to that effect? If there is no evidence, you need to turn to Christ in repentance and faith before it is too late.

God's grace always CHANGES the believer and He will do it for you. We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone apart from works. But this grace-driven saving Faith produces the good works of holiness and obedience to and through God our Savior in Christ. Be sure that your faith is a lively, life-changing, and grace-filled faith in Jesus Christ alone. The world needs this message of grace. Live it and give this message of grace to the world.

Let me summarize what I have been saying to you with this theological formula that captures the theological differences on Salvation or Justification in the Christian church:

- a. Faith in Christ + Good Works = Justification (Roman Catholic/Arminianism)
- b. Faith in Christ = Justification - Good Works (Antinomianism)
- c. Faith in Christ = Justification + Good Works (Biblical & Reformed Theology). *This view is the correct view of Justification or Salvation in the Bible.* God's Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone leads to Justification and good works!

"Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works."

-- John Calvin

May God renew us, reform the Anglican Communion, and enable us to remain faithful to His glorious and grace-filled gospel through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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