

**Five Solas
Grace Alone
Genesis 2:16-3:24**

This afternoon – Fall Festival, from 3-5:30, including Trunk or Treating for the last half hour. I cannot even imagine how much fun it is going to be!

Next Sunday is Reformation Sunday – 500 years old! We will celebrate by showing the film Martin Luther. We will eat from 5-5:30 and then we will begin the Luther film at 5:30, realizing that a few may still be eating when the film begins. If you are enjoying this series on the Five Solas of the Reformation at any level, you do not want to miss this film. Childcare will provided.

Several weeks ago, I asked how many of you enjoy history. I was a bit taken aback at how many of you raised your hand to say that you truly enjoy history. I imagine that those of you who do not like history would say the reason you don't like history is because it is so boring. The other side would quickly say, "It is fascinating!" Where is the disconnect? Probably in the early going. History may be riveting – but, it is often necessary to wade through the foundational material to get to the good stuff. Careful readers of history know, though, that without taking the time to lay a solid foundation, much nuance and color is lost in translation. If the foundation is improperly laid, it is usually only a small step to misunderstanding the people and events you are studying.

What does history have to do with our day, anyway? Well – everything. The failure to fully grasp and embrace the foundation for a biblical worldview will almost certainly lead to confusion and resentment. When you read the Bible, there is a different trajectory than other history you may read. Instead of starting off with a boring introduction, Genesis jumps right in with Creation and then

moves from one compelling story to another – stories that are filled with profound theological implications, making the first book of the Bible seem like it belongs more in the NT than in the OT. I wish I had time to elaborate, but at least we will be back in Genesis in two weeks. This morning, as part of our Sola series, our text will be Genesis 2:16-3:24, with a few verses omitted for time. With an abbreviated sermon so that we can get to our Sola Panel, the focus will be on the implications of God’s grace found early in the Bible.

Just a brief word about the current series on the five solas. October, 2017 marks the 500-year anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant movement in which churches moved away from the Roman Catholic Church because of differences in interpretation of Scripture. Solus Gratia, or, Grace alone, is one of the five solas that distinguishes Protestant doctrine from Roman Catholic doctrine. It is not that the Medieval Catholic Church denied the authority of Scripture or that Jesus was the God-Man come to save sinners, nor did it deny the need for God’s grace and the need for faith or that God is worthy of glory. It was when you added the word “alone” that you were in danger of being burned at the stake as a heretic.

Can you imagine being burned at the stake for believing and publicly affirming that God saves sinners by Grace Alone? Exactly! It is why the context of historical events and thoughts are important in contemporary conversations. Why do Protestants think that God’s grace is essential to salvation? Because of man’s nature. Adam was created with original righteousness – but, he sinned, thus none of us is born righteous. The doctrine of original sin points to Adam’s sin as representative of all humanity and it is passed to all.

This morning, I will be reading from Genesis 2 and 3, with the briefest of comments. Perhaps the biggest challenge in this series on the solas is what *not* to say – what to leave out. At the end of the message, two of our elders, Jim McLaughlin and Bert Wallace, will

join me to talk about Grace Alone. You will have to trust me when I say that the Scripture we read this morning is foundational for everything else in this series, and, truly, though it will sound fantastical, the first three chapters of Genesis lays the foundation for everything in Scripture and for understanding all of life. If you get this wrong, you get everything else wrong. Got it? Such an audacious claim should be fully addressed, but it will not be until next week before we get fully in that direction. To the Word. I will portions of Genesis 2 while we are standing, and after prayer, we will look at Genesis 3. We will skip a few verses. Would you please stand for the reading of God’s Word? I will be reading from the English Standard Version. Genesis 2:15:

Genesis 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

**“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”**

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

In verse 25, we are told that Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. For the Hebrews, who would be the primary readers of Scripture until after Jesus came, this would be surprising because nakedness was considered shameful, as it was often associated with guilt. It is interesting, is it not, that their nakedness was the first thing they noticed after their eyes were opened, even though the sin they committed was not sexual in nature. In our day, we are going in the opposite direction – “There is nothing shameful about the human body! We should not be ashamed of the way God made us.” I am NOT saying that sex is wrong or shameful – in fact, just the opposite. Sex a beautiful gift from God, in the appropriate context. You will also note that Jesus affirmed the beauty of one man and one woman in marriage. But, you are going to have to jump through a lot of theological hoops to justify nakedness and sexual activity according to contemporary cultural norms. Again, everything goes back to Genesis 1-3. Let’s look at Genesis 3, where you will not need a lot of explanation to understand it; you will only need to believe it.

3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were

opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

I imagine Adam and Eve expected to die, right then and there. By this point, they probably understood death and they were, no doubt, afraid. Indeed, they had already died spiritually, and, the process of physical death had also already begun in their bodies. But, instead of immediate execution, God extended grace, even in the face of their excuse making and blame shifting. Verse 11:

11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 The Lord God said to the serpent,

**“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.**

**15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;**

**he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”**

Genesis 3:15 is known as the Protoevangelium, or, the first mention of the gospel in Scripture. Even though Satan, who is the serpent, will inflict a great deal of misery on mankind, a man will be born to Eve and/or her offspring that will ultimately crush the head of the snake. In Genesis 4:1, when Cain was born to Eve, she said, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” She thought Cain was the offspring – but no. Then, perhaps Isaac, who was promised to Abraham. No. Moses? David? Solomon? Again, no. It was not until Jesus that all the promises of Genesis 3:15 were fulfilled. Verse 16:

16 To the woman he said,

**“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”**

17 And to Adam he said,

**“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.**

**19 By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,**

and to dust you shall return.”

20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

We will stop there. As Adam and Eve stood there with the cold and wet bloody skins of animals that had been slain to cover the guilt of their sin, what must they have felt like? This was, in essence, the first sacrifice – death as the consequence of sin. Carl Trueman said, quote: “Sacrifice is connected to salvation and grace. Sacrifices were raw and bloody affairs.” In other words, there is no grace apart from sacrifice.

Why all this talk of sin and utter dependence of God for salvation, week after week? Because God’s grace will never be meaningful apart from our acknowledgement of sin. We will close this portion of the message with Psalm 83:16: “Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O Lord.” Powerful, isn’t it?

Contemplate the wisdom of such a prayer as our two panelists come to the platform to discuss the great truth of Grace Alone. Bert Wallace is a professor of Theater Arts at Campbell University and is in the middle of directing a play at Campbell this weekend. The last show is at 2:30 this afternoon. Jim McLaughlin is a professor at the Campbell University School of Law. Thank you, gentlemen, for participating on this panel today.

Both of you have been reading Carl Trueman’s book titled, appropriately enough, Grace Alone. At the end of the book, Trueman gives 10 characteristics of a “Grace Alone Church.” We are going to display these characteristics on the screen during our panel discussion. Feel free to refer to these characteristics at any time during our conversation.

- 1. Jim, you are one of the founding members of Grace Community Church. You were also on the team that wrote our Church Constitution, which was ratified by all the founding members. Would you speak to the choice of the name? Why “Grace?”**
- 2. Bert, there are any number of notions that people may have about grace. Can you give us a biblical definition of grace?**
- 3. But, isn't it true that God helps those who help themselves?**
- 4. Is it, then, impossible for us to do anything about our relationship with God? Why?**
- 5. Is it really necessary to be so focused on acknowledging our sin?**
- 6. So, if grace is God's unmerited favor that he gives without any effort on my part, once God has saved me, may I then live as I want**

Marks of a “Grace Alone Church” – Carl Trueman

Takes sin seriously

Takes Christ seriously

Takes God's priority in personal salvation seriously

Takes assurance seriously

Takes the corporate gathering of the visible church seriously

Takes the Bible seriously

Takes preaching seriously

Takes baptism seriously

Takes the Lord's Supper seriously

Takes prayer seriously