

I remember the day like yesterday. I was around 10. And, our extended family had gathered for Thanksgiving. It's always been a holiday I've loved. But, it was my aunt's pumpkin pie I looked forward to most! She arrived. And, I couldn't wait until dinner to partake. I cut a piece, took a bite, and... yuck. My face told my aunt and others that something was definitely wrong. It turns out, she forgot to add the sugar!

We all understand recipes, don't we? Every single ingredient is important! Take one away, and it's just NOT the same. Today, we continue our life lesson series, "SOLA". We're talking about the five "alone/only" statements that made up the recipe for Reformation theology... *SOLA Scriptura*, *SOLA Fide*, *SOLA Gratia*, *SOLUS Christus*, *SOLI Deo Gloria*. Today, we look at *SOLA Gratia: Grace Alone*, a key ingredient!

Lutheran Cyclopedia says, "Grace is good will and favor shown to one who can plead no merit." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Samuel Naftzger, says, "At the heart of what we (Lutherans) believe is the conviction that salvation is the free gift of God's grace (undeserved mercy) for Christ's sake alone."

But, in Martin Luther's day, instead of this, the Church was selling grace. Indulgences worked similar to "get out of jail free" cards in Monopoly. You pay a sum of \$\$ to the church, and leaders grant grace to

someone who has died so their sentence in purgatory is shortened. This is why Luther protested, wrote *A Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* (i.e. “The 95 Theses”), and “stood” on grace alone.

So, how is grace relevant to us today? First, Grace is operative. Grace generates faith. In Romans 3:22b-25a (ESV), Paul says, “There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” If you “get this”, it’s by God’s grace alone!

Second, Grace is cooperative. Grace is active in the Christian, jointly with the regenerated will, to produce good works. In Romans 6:22 (ESV), Paul says, “Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.” We ALL desire to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith. If you “get there”, it’s by God’s grace alone!

Let’s pray. Lord, Revelation 22:21 (ESV) says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all (the saints). Amen.” Lord, today, help us receive Your free gift of unmerited grace and favor toward sinful humanity. Help us draw near to Your throne with confidence for grace upon grace. Help us renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And, help us live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.