

Date: 12.08.2020

Time: 7.30pm

Service taken by: Rev Gavino Fioretti

Psalm: Psalm 65:1-5

Reading: Ephesians 1-2:10

Text: Ephesians 2:8-10

Outline: Grace Alone: Described

a) Introduction

1. Its definition

2. Its historical relevance

3. Its theological necessity

4. Its nature

5. Its fruits

Grace Alone: Described

- **Introduction**

Grace alone is one of the war cries of the reformation. Last time, we distinguished between common grace and saving grace. We thought of the grace of God that calls people to salvation. We thought of common grace being temporary, enjoyed in this life only. Tonight, we focus more on saving grace.

The whole Scripture: Saving grace is present in the whole of scripture. The New Testament is just a different administration of the covenant of grace. Without the Old Testament, there would be no hope for Christ to come. The whole scripture is full of divine grace.

The whole salvation: Every aspect of salvation is the work of God, from beginning to end. You are saved not because you wanted to be, but because before the world was made, God planned for you to be saved and sent His Son to bring forgiveness and salvation. The Holy Spirit is given as the seal of your salvation. The justification and sanctification is all God's work. God didn't leave any part of my salvation in my own hands, but took everything on Himself and did it all for me. God knows that we have no strength of ourselves and He did everything needed to achieve salvation.

1) Its definition

Saving grace is the life-giving favour of God bestowed upon hostile and hell-deserving sinners. Grace is not an attribute of God, but a manifestation of His love. Because He is loving, He decides to show grace to those who deserve judgment. This is life-giving.

2) Its historical relevance

Against catholicism: Salvation is by grace, through faith in Christ. But the Catholic church adds to grace something else, faith and something else, Christ and others. But in the reformation, the war cry was *grace alone*.

Against arminianism: The church's response against arminianism was clarification that grace and grace alone saves, not grace and something else. It's not the work of God and man together – it's God's work. We're not saved by our own merits, but just by God's grace.

History has a habit of repeating itself. Grace alone seems unfair, but we need this reminder that we're saved by grace alone.

3) Its theological necessity

Man's sinfulness: We were dead in sin. Salvation has to be by grace alone, because we are sinners. We cannot live a perfect life. God shows grace to us. We sinned before conversion, but it's not a past event – it's a sad daily reality. We sin repeatedly, unashamedly and we deserve God's punishment. But instead of punishing us, He gives forgiveness and life.

Man's inability: Man is incapable of doing any good of himself. A dead person cannot respond, and this is Paul's description of everyone before salvation. We were unable to do anything for God or for our own souls. God has to do all the work – we cannot contribute with our works. We cannot do anything for our salvation. Salvation is by grace alone for spiritually dead sinners.

Man's chief end: Man's chief end is to glorify God. God receives all the glory in our salvation as He does everything. We have nothing to be proud of.

4) Its nature

Sovereign: God's grace is amazing because it is sovereign. We were chosen before the foundation of the world. We were elect, predestined. This choice of God is His own decision, not His response. Paul writes to the Romans: "*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion*"— So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. We receive grace not because of us. God gives this sovereign grace freely. It's difficult to understand, but it's wonderful. We don't deserve His love. It's not because of anything God saw in us that He saved us – we're Hell-deserving sinners, but He appointed us to eternal life. If you're a

Christian today, it's because before the foundation of the world, God chose you to be His own. He's loved you with an eternal love.

Irresistible: Those God has chosen to be His will never be lost. God makes sure we come to Christ. No-one will change God's mind. He's unchangeable in His will, character and plan. Not even your unwillingness can stop Him.

Active: When we think of grace, we think of an attitude, or feelings. But God's grace is real and seen.

Undeserved: Grace comes not to neutral people. God poured wrath on Jesus. Jesus paid the price for our salvation.

Expensive: Love is costly, it's sacrificial. Grace is free for us, but costly and expensive to God – it cost the life of His own Son.

Offensive: It's offensive to the believers and unbelievers that God would save some, not others. God's grace challenges our idea of fairness and our picture of ourselves. We think that man is good. But if no one were saved, God would still be just.

Amazing: When we understand who we are and who God is, we should be amazed by God's grace.

5) Its fruits

Salvation: God's grace saves us. In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness. It's all God's doing.

Humility: God's grace does not congratulate us, but crushes our pride. It shames and humbles men by nature. Sovereign grace humbles us because it makes us not the subject but the object of salvation.

Worship: Grace should bring worship. We can't ask for God's grace based on our goodness, or the good in others. We ask that the salvation of sinners would bring glory to His name. We're saved by grace so that God might get all the glory.