

## **Sola Gratia – Grace Alone in Salvation (Ephesians 1:4-6)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on Reformation Day, October 31, 2010*

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October 31<sup>st</sup> is known to church history as *Reformation Day* (day the Protestant Reformation began). 10/31 is a celebration or commemoration of what happened in Germany Oct. 31, 1517, as a 95-point paper was nailed to the Wittenburg Door ‘Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences’ (papers of pardon from purgatory). In the Reformation tradition the last Sunday of October is known as Reformation Sunday, and here in 2010, Reformation Sunday falls right on Reformation Day 10/31.

For hundreds of years November 1<sup>st</sup> had marked the RCC holiday “All Saint’s Day” (in old English “All Hallows”). Later in history, in the United Kingdom, the day *before* was called All-Hallows-Even (even=evening, i.e., eve before All Hallows Day, like Christmas Eve). A Scottish variation of *even* is *e’en* and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the shortened form “Hallow-e’en” began being used in the English speaking world, but sadly the Christian heritage of Oct. 31 for the UK and North America was soon lost and replaced with traditions from a Celtic fall festival, and in the last century most in America only knew of trick-or-treaters at their doors but had no idea what Luther had put on a door in Wittenburg centuries before.

It’s not my goal to digress to paganism, occultism, and spiritism in the symbols that our world celebrates today (evil spirits, witches, sorcery, and other things Scripture has some words about). But it’s a shame that today the vast majority of English-speakers around the world only think of a party-day to wear costumes, often from pagan religions whether or not they realize it, and eat lots of candy till you’re sick, rather than the day the gospel began to be rescued from a religion that had become pagan itself in its focus and prayers to and for dead spirits. Luther strategically planted his paper on this day before All Saint’s Day, not because of anything religious tied to Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, but more about the next day, when Wittenburg would be open and many would come to view a large collection of RCC relics, and were taught viewing them would reduce time in purgatory, like buying indulgences. On that day on the Wittenburg Door where so many would pass by and would see it, as you walked in, you could see people buzzing and discussing this:

“Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther ...

**2.** This word [repentance] cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, i.e., [the religious ritual of] confession and satisfaction, which is administered by the priests ...

**21.** those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope’s indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved...

**27.** They preach man who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].

**28.** It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice [corrupt greed] can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone ...

**32.** They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon [“the pope’s pardon” he explains in #33] ...

**37.** Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.

62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God...  
 72. he who guards against the lust and license of the pardon-preachers, let him be blessed! ...  
 86. “Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?”

You don't have to know much about religion or church history to know, as they say in the South “dem's fightin' words!” You can imagine Luther wasn't winning any votes for Catholic of the Year, but his goal was not earning the graces or favor of man, only to lift up the unearned grace and favor of God in the true gospel of Christ *even if it meant laying down his life for the truth of God's Word.*

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:  
 Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
 The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,  
 His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther didn't want us only to sing those words he wrote in that hymn. He wouldn't want us to celebrate or focus on him as a sanctified superhero. He would want our focus on *Christ alone* as we celebrate the gospel of salvation *by grace alone* that could save sinners like him, and to elevate *Scripture alone*, not just by our lips but by our lives that we would be willing to lay down for it as well.

Luther was really just an echo of the Apostle Paul whom he loved so much, and the Reformation itself was in many ways a return to the glorious truths Paul taught in Romans and Galatians and also succinctly and supremely displayed in Ephesians, our present study

As we work our way through Ephesians verse-by-verse, I'm going to be unashamedly standing on Reformation soil with both feet, and drawing our attention to these great historic doctrines that were later known as the five *solas* of the Reformation. Not as a systematic theology textbook by a theologian would present it, but in the very personal, pastoral, and practical way that Paul presents the biblical balanced truths in Ephesians, in the order this letter was written to everyday Christians to help them praise God and live worthy of His grace, in an ancient ungodly city much like cities in Northern CA. The true gospel of sovereign grace was not invented by Luther or Calvin or any Reformer, it was simply a rediscovery and restatement of what Paul taught in Ephesians and his other letters, who in turn was just restating what Jesus had taught, who Himself is just restating what Moses taught in Genesis (and the OT).

**Ephesians 1:3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in*

*Him*<sup>10</sup> with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In *Him*<sup>11</sup> also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,<sup>12</sup> to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.<sup>13</sup> In *Him*, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in *Him* with the Holy Spirit of promise,<sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Using Scripture alone, and really just one sentence alone from the Apostle Paul, we have a celebration of all 5 Reformation *solas*. In the original Greek v. 3-14 is one massive sentence of worship to God for salvation; wonder, love and praise for sovereign grace to:

- spiritual orphans from God the Father who adopted us (v.5)
- slaves of sin redeemed by God the Son (v. 7), brought into His home to eat at the King’s table as His adopted brothers
- God the Holy Spirit seals us (v. 13b-14) and secures the transaction, all for former children of wrath who had the spirit of disobedient sons within them (2:2-3), regenerating us and implanting spiritual life where there once was none (2:5-6), taking out the old man and old self and replacing it with a new self and new spirit and new mind (see 4:22-24) and the HS is filling us continually to help us be obedient (5:18ff) rather than our former disobedient disposition.

*Sola* is the Latin word for “alone or only” (with some nouns it’s *solus* or *sola* – we use “solo” in English when a person sings *alone* or is the *only* one at the microphone). But this worship song Paul bursts into in v. 3-14 is not a solo praise, like some of the Psalms, it’s a chorus for all believers. There are five Latin phrases I hope every person in this church will know before this year is over, and that I hope will begin to affect all of us present before this day is over, and that all of my heart hopes these 5 truths will always be the banner over all that we are and all that we do for all our lives.

1. ***Sola Gratia* – Grace alone (v. 2-5)**
2. ***Soli Deo Gloria* – to God alone be the glory (v. 6)**
3. ***Solo Christo* – Christ alone (v. 7-12)**
4. ***Sola Fide* – Faith alone (v. 13)**
5. ***Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone (v. 13)**

Today we’ll just have time for the first point, which is the heart of the true gospel that was recovered in the events that followed this very day 493 years ago, *salvation by grace alone (sola gratia)*. But I wanted to take a moment first to introduce you to the others we’ll look at when we get to them in our verse-by-verse study during November and December, building a solid foundation for the New Year and the years ahead for us as individuals and as a church.

For those of you who already are very familiar with these, I hope this refresher will refresh your heart. For those not as familiar with these, I hope you remember these so they will reinforce your faith. What is the first and foremost one that unifies and clarifies salvation?

## ***Sola Gratia – Grace alone***

Each of those points deserve their own sermon, and will get their own sermon when we get to those verses in the weeks ahead, but for the rest of this sermon I want to look at *sola gratia*, grace alone. Grace is how Paul begins this letter in v. 2: “*Grace to you...*” The word *grace* is also how Paul ends this letter. And all that Paul has to say to all the saints (v. 1) is dependent on grace (v. 2ff). All of salvation in v. 3-14 is all of grace alone. All the spiritual blessings that are all available from our all-sufficient God in Christ (v. 3), all that we are and all that we have is all by God’s grace alone. Our focus is v. 4-6, but all the blessings in v. 7 are also all of grace also “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ...*”

At the beginning and end of our text and in-between is *sola gratia*. All who the Father chose before the foundation of the earth (v. 4), owe all to grace alone. All that the Father lovingly predestines in v. 5 are sons of God by adopting grace alone; v. 6 says it’s all “*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us*”

That’s why some call it “sovereign grace” or “free grace.” Paul is worshipping God here, so it seems appropriate to start not with the perplexing questions here, but with songs that praise God for grace and have tried to capture the essence of what Paul is saying here.

Thy free grace alone from the first to the last  
Hath won my affection and bound my soul fast

An old hymn “By Grace Are Ye Saved” sums up Ephesians 1-2 this way:

He calls His chosen from afar; They all at Zion’s gates arrive;  
Those who were dead in sin before By sovereign grace are made alive.

Charles Wesley, who wrote so many of the hymns we sing, wrote

Clap your hands, ye people all, Praise the God on Whom ye call;  
Lift your voice, and shout His praise, Triumph in His sovereign grace!

A more modern hymn says it this way:

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise.  
... Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger ... How His kindness yet pursues me ...  
... O that day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face;  
Cloth-ed then in blood washed linen How I’ll sing Thy sovereign grace ...

Wesley and others who would not identify themselves with the Reformers or Reformed churches, also sound these notes. Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* (10/25) wrote on election in v. 4: “Keep that note of greatness in your creed. It is not that you have got God, but that He has got you. Why is God at work in me, bending, breaking, molding, doing just as He chooses? For one purpose only—that He may be able to say, “This is my man, my woman.” ...

“When once a saint puts his confidence in the election of God, no tribulation or affliction can ever touch that confidence. When we realize that there is no hope of deliverance in human wisdom, or in human rectitude, or in anything that we can do . . . this is the finest cure for spiritual degeneration or spiritual [depression].” (Chambers, *Christian Disciplines* )

J. Vernon McGee, who also wouldn't call himself a Reformed theologian just someone seeking to faithfully handle the Bible, said in his *Thru the Bible Commentary* (Volume 5, p. 213-218): “the truth they contain is hard to receive. These verses are like a walnut--hard to crack but with a lot of goodies on the inside . . . [v. 4] carries our mind back to eternity past to make us realize that salvation is altogether of God and not at all of ourselves. You and I are not the originators or the [initiators] or the consummators of our salvation. God did it all. An old hymn . . .

’Tis not that I did choose Thee For, Lord, that could not be.

This heart would still refuse Thee But Thou hast chosen me.

. . . God planned our salvation way back yonder in eternity before you and I were even in this world at all [that’s what v. 4 says, he says I didn’t make predestination up] . . . A boy in Memphis, Tennessee, wanted to join a conservative, fundamental church, and the deacons were examining him. They asked him, “How did you get saved?” He answered, “I did my part, and God did His part” The deacons thought they had him, so they asked him what was his part and what was God’s part. He said, “My part was the sinning. I ran from God as fast as these rebellious legs would take me and my sinful heart would lead me. I ran from Him. But you know, He done took out after me ’til He done run me down.” My friend, there is nothing in a theology book that tells it as well as that. God is the One who did the saving. Our part was the sinning.

. . . A little boy was asked, “Have you found Jesus?” The little fellow answered, “Sir, I didn’t know He was lost. But I was lost and He found me.” My friend, you don’t find Jesus. *He* finds you. He is the One who went out after the lost sheep, and He is the One who found that sheep . . . He did not choose us because we were good or because we would do some good, but He did choose us so that we *could* do some good . . . It is a glorious and wonderful thing that the God of heaven would elect some of us down here and save us . . . I don’t propose to understand all that-I just believe it

. . . Someone came to Spurgeon one time and said, “Mr. Spurgeon, if I believed as you do, I would not preach like you do. You say you believe that there are the elect, and yet you preach as if everybody can be saved.” Spurgeon’s answer . . . “If God had put a yellow streak up and down the backs of the elect, I’d go up and down the streets lifting up shirt tails to find out who had the yellow streak up and down his back. Then I’d give that person the gospel. But God didn’t do that. He told me to preach the gospel to every creature and that whosoever will may come.” That is our marching order, and as far as I am concerned, until God gives me the roll call of the elect, I am going to preach [to] “whosoever will” . . .

Someone else has put it like this. On the door to heaven, from our side, it says, “*Whosoever will may enter*” [which Jesus said] . . . on the other side of the door . . . you will find written, “*Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world*” [another verse in Eph 1:4] [McGee]I give God (since He is God) the right to plan *His* church . . . After all, this is His universe, and the church is His church.”

You may not agree with McGee and me ... you may not like a particular theological term or book or pastor's explanation of some of the questions in relation to those doctrines, but we all need to believe everything God says in His Word.

And if you ask me later what I believe about election and predestination, what I believe is not really relevant, all I can do is read you v. 4-5 and 11 (and 2:1-10, etc). We hit lots of verses like these teaching verse-by-verse and believe them, nothing more, nothing less, and we just don't want to make something less of God's grace by making it something that just helps those who God knew would help themselves to salvation.

Paul doesn't launch into the greatest praise in biblical history here thinking how God saw in the future that Paul would pursue Jesus and choose Jesus and therefore God chose Paul. No, Paul launches into praise that *God chose Paul (v. 4) all by God's will (v. 1)* not Paul's. God pursued Paul *while Paul's persecuting Jesus (Acts 9)*.

If you were to tell Paul, "well, I like to think God can't intervene and give special grace, He waits for us to take the first step." Paul could say "have you read my testimony or any of my letters?! If you think you can take any credit for any part of your salvation, you won't grasp the heights of worship here in 1:3-14 [or 2:1-10]."

Can I stand before you all and explain all the mysteries and all the questions you have about how all this intersects with all other passages? No. But I don't want to stand before God someday to explain why I *explained away something He explains* in His Word, and I don't want to short-circuit what's intended to blow our mind.

If seeking to be faithful with the text, preaching the whole counsel of God verse-by-verse and not just my favorite parts, if that means some will be offended or not come back because "I'm one of those ..." (whatever misrepresentation they have or misunderstanding), I can live with that but I can't skip or sidestep any scripture to please any man. I'm content to not know it all and let God be God rather than try and fit the purposes of an infinite God into my finite little brain.

God has the right as sovereign over all to judge all justly in hell, and He also by grace alone can snatch some who deserve hell if He desires, and He isn't obligated to explain His secrets as He does so. And no one who goes to hell goes unfairly or undeservedly or can blame anyone but themselves for their free and willful rebellion. And no one who goes to heaven can boast in themselves of what they did or decided -- all the glory goes to God's grace alone (v. 6).

Let's walk through v. 4 with who, what, where, when, why questions of basic Bible study:

- Who chose whom in this passage? *He [God] chose us ...*
- What did He chose us to be before Him? *Holy, blameless*
- Where does He choose and put us in? *He chose us...in Him*
- When did He choose us? *Before the foundation of the world*
- Why did He choose me?...get your pen ready: *I don't know*

The phrase “in love” at the end of v. 4 really goes with v. 5 and is more technically “how” He did it, but doesn’t really explain *why* I in particular was chosen and loved and adopted and not another. *I don’t know* ultimately why I am in God’s family today while many are not. But I can’t conclude from Scripture that the ultimate reason or cause is something in me (that I was smarter or had superior decision-making ability or). *I do know* that’s the wrong answer even though *I don’t know* answers to other questions you have.

Why didn’t God choose to save everyone? *I don’t know* that the Bible answers that question? I know some humans try to answer it with “well, He *couldn’t* save everyone” (be careful). Or “well He’d rather have a world where people freely choose heaven or hell with no God intervening in their will so their love of Him could be just spontaneous and self-produced” (be careful, that’s very close to the heresy of Pelagius who even the RCC rejected in church history).

The Arminian view from 17<sup>th</sup> century said the Reformers were wrong about God’s free grace causing salvation, it’s really man’s free will that is the decisive cause. That’s a popular view today but it doesn’t evade difficulty either: if God knew who would reject by their free will, why did He allow them to be born? Why not just have people who’d choose Him be born? Others recognize that’s still a difficulty with the Arminian view so they go further and say that God doesn’t know the future, it’s really man’s free will that is supreme and sovereign, God’s just a spectator (open theist heresy).

Others go further and recognize that none of the views do away with our discomfort of the doctrine of eternal punishment for any, and so they either say everyone goes to heaven (heresy of universalism) or there is no hell (heresy of annihilationism).

Listen, anytime we get away from God’s revelation and into finite man’s speculation, there is all kinds of trouble. Those rabbit trails are loaded with traps. Those paths I don’t want to go down if Scripture doesn’t. I do know that Scripture rules out certain things, and whatever Ephesians 1 is teaching must match with Ephesians 2. Try and fully describe some of these things and you may lose your mind, but begin denying anything God clearly teaches and you may lose your soul! Better to say “I don’t know.”

You can quote me on this, too: “God is God, and I am not.” If you’re not content to allow God the sovereign right to do what He does whether or not your mind fully understands it, or to not reveal to you some secrets, you’re not going to be content here or in a lot of other places in Scripture. Deuteronomy 29:29: *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us...*

Election in v. 4 and predestination in v. 5 are part of the “*things revealed that belong to us*” – If God says it, that settles it, believe it. Let me share some pastoral words at this point: Be settled with God having secrets that belong to Him about His eternal counsels. Be willing to acknowledge God’s a whole lot smarter than you are.

Be carefully studying the Scripture further and prayerfully asking God to help you understand more. Be reverent as you approach these types of truths, not ready or eager to debate about them. Be quick to hear what God says, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

Be patient with me if I can't adequately explain what great theologians have struggled to for centuries, in the time remaining today! Some of these things may grow clearer in future messages ... or in heaven.

Be willing to accept whatever God has explained and not to try to explain away what the Bible clearly says just because it doesn't fit with how you like to think or how you've been taught before. Be humble as you submit your mind to Scripture and be willing to say "*I don't know* but I do know that God does and I trust His Word."

Be careful not to remove the mystery and tension (ex: "it's easy to know why God chose me, because He knew I would choose Him, and all those Reformers and great minds of church history who all talk about 'this great mystery' ... hey, I've got it all figured out, this is easy!").

Be joyful you have a God *you can't so easily figure out* and who is much bigger than your pastor can explain in the next 20 minutes! Most importantly, be praising God like Paul does in this chapter. Don't retranslate it "*blessed be God for knowing my future choice*" What makes Paul launch into the NT's longest greatest praise, of such magnificent and majestic and mind-blowing content, is not because God responds to what man does and then does the rest. It's because God *rescues from what man is and does* by free grace alone!

*Blessed be God [v. 4] just as He chose us ... [v. 5] In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us ...*

### **Who chose whom in this passage? *He [God] chose us ...***

Cross-ref: John 15:16 "*You did not choose Me but I chose you...*"

Now, there is a sense in which followers of Jesus did choose to follow Him, and we daily must choose to take up our cross and follow Him, but we don't and can't do so by our own will-power. It's not by human might, not by power, but by the Spirit of God.

God's grace must work a miracle in us first *so that we can and will* choose Him. When Jesus says "*You did not choose me, but I chose you*" He is saying His choice was the decisive choice, not ours, as v. 5 of John 15 explains: "*apart from Me you can do nothing.*"

Maria von Trap once sang "nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could." But as we'll see tonight, the same God who could make something out of nothing in the original creation in Genesis 1, by sovereign command, can do the same giving spiritual life to a new creation.

### **What did He chose us to be before Him? *Holy and blameless***

Look over at chapter 5 where Paul uses this same phrase again:

<sup>27</sup> *that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be **holy and blameless.***

In both cases, “holy and blameless” was a goal of the Lord’s grace and prior plan. He chooses us so He can use us, taking a spiritually useless people and making them spiritually useful by grace (v. 26), making them like Christ, from now to the final day.

He set us apart for special sovereign grace so that we might live set apart lives, to be holy *because God is holy*, to love *because He first loved us*. In v. 25 Christ chose to love us first, intimately as a husband to a wife, not because He knew we would be a holy and blameless and wonderful wife, but with full knowledge that we would always be unholy and blameworthy without Him. He sought us out to be His bride, not because we had beauty or beautiful qualities to attract Him, quite the opposite. He made Himself attractive to us when we were back in Eph. 2:1-3. He nourishes and cherishes us (5:29) He makes us more beautiful in Christ (v. 26)

Grace is the undeserved, unearned, unmerited kindness and favor and love of God given to sinners who are unkind, unfavorable, unloving, and unlovely to a God who hates sin and can’t stand to look on it. And what’s even more amazing about grace is that we sinners, left to ourselves, can’t stand to look at Christ. Sometimes people think the doctrines of grace are unfair because they picture all these people who would have otherwise wanted to be in heaven but they’re shut out only because their name is not on the list, and so they’d have a valid complaint at judgment if election is true.

Imagine this scene: A single lady attending a wedding because she knew the bride but she absolutely and totally can’t stand the groom and hates to even be in the same room as him for the wedding but she’s only sitting through the service for the sake of her friend who invited her. She’s grumbling next to you. You ask ‘what’s wrong?’

She replies, “It’s just not fair. Why did the groom choose her to be his bride? She didn’t like him initially at all, she thought he was lame, a loser. Why did he love *Sally and seek her out and win her heart and want to spend forever with her and not me?*”

You’re a little confused, “Well, I’m not completely sure what moved him to choose and pursue and woo Sally, and you can ask him if you want after, but he does has the right to choose who he wants to set his love upon, and he’s not obligated to do the same with every girl out there. But what’s confusing me is I thought you couldn’t stand him and didn’t want anything to do with him? You’ve told me many times every minute you’re around him makes your skin crawl and you’d rather be dead than around him?”

Your friend says, “Oh, I know. I do hate him and always have and I wouldn’t even consider hanging around him if he ever asked or invited me over to his and Sally’s place...it’s just not fair”

It’s not unfair or unjust for God to give to any sinner what he or she wants (to be apart from Him)? No one goes to hell unfairly. But anyone who gets to heaven gets there undeservedly. Praise God some of us don’t get what’s fair (hell—why us? *don’t know*). It would be fair if God didn’t give grace to any from fallen humanity – that was the case for fallen angels. There is no grace offered for angels after they fell by their choice, but for man God doesn’t exact that same justice that is in His nature! It would be completely fair and righteous to send all fallen humans to the same place that all fallen angels will go. But by a great mystery, the Holy One chooses from unholy people to make some holy. Why us? For Sally and us, let’s leave grace unexplainably amazingly glorious.

Does it bother you, that the Lord has set His special love on the church in v. 25? Shall we allow humans the prerogative to choose who they want to court toward marriage, but not the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Are we ok with the Lord choosing and then wooing a bride for Himself who did not love Him and would never love Him unless He first won her affections to Himself, conquering her heart, and capturing her love, not by doing violence to her will but drawing her will to Christ irresistibly by the magnet of grace so that she freely and willingly comes because of what **He** has done?

Christ goes to greater length than any man to win His bride, and He has greater power to change her heart than any man can for the maiden he seeks, and He will not lose this bride to another man (or devil). The analogy of Christ to His church as a bride to groom, in v. 32, is said to be a profound mystery, that I can't assume to fully grasp, but Paul does give such God-inspired analogies that help us understand election a little more, family analogies of marriage and adoption. Ezekiel 16 actually brings both of those analogies together.

### **Where does He choose and put us in? *He chose us ... in Him***

It's all in Christ, through Christ, by Christ's work, for the glory of Christ. Christ paid the bride-price for us, a very costly price. In the Bible times, the prospective groom went through the father. They didn't use terms like "courting" or "dating" in Bible times, but the relationships of believing young people were always first through the father until the American 20<sup>th</sup> century. The prospective groom not only had to get permission by the Father to pursue His daughter, He had to pay a price to marry her.

The price Father God required was death. Jesus paid it (v. 25). Christ brings us into intimate relationship with Him, inseparably one with Christ now as 5:30 says. Because of what Christ did for us in v. 25, v. 30 says now we are His body, as much as His own flesh and blood and bones (I'm not even sure I fully understand what that means but maybe we'll understand it more when we get to chapter 5, or at least when we get to glory). It's amazing that we are brothers of Christ, as we saw last week, but to be the bride of Christ, is to me more amazing. Verses 31-32 say that when God created marriage in Genesis 2, the actual point He always planned was for us to understand our relationship to Christ better. I hope God will help us understand better what "in Christ" means as we study through Ephesians, which uses it as much or more than any.

### **When did He choose us? *Before the foundation of the world***

I don't know a whole lot more about this point, so I'll keep it short. But if you come back tonight, we're going to go back to Genesis 1, and trace out how the Reformers saw creation as the foundation for the Reformation, and we'll look at the few Scriptures that speak of what was going on before Genesis 1:1, the foundation of salvation. I hope tonight's message will help us understand election more.

Ephesians 1:5 says God the Father predestined us to adoption, but as amazing as that is, that wasn't the end of the story. The Father also had an eternal plan for His adopted daughter (believing Israel and the church) to be presented one day as a bride as a gift to the Lord Jesus! It just keeps getting better, beloved, in the Beloved (as 1:6 calls Jesus)!

I thought my last 2 messages on adoption were my favorite and greatest truths I could ever contemplate, and I just keep encountering more layers of greater and greater grace! This is my new favorite truth in the Bible, electing grace! The end is not adopting grace, but betrothing grace to a bride for Christ, for us!

This is much bigger than us. This is bigger than the universe (not just bigger than the world). This is greater than the universe, in the sense that it is before the universe existed, and it is the purpose of the universe, as John Piper says of divine adoption, and if I can take his language even further, which I know he would agree with, adoption, marriage to Christ for all eternity, and all things are aimed ultimately, as Ephesians 1:6 says “*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*”

Which brings us from sola gratia to next week, Soli Deo Gloria.