

SOLA GRATIA- GRACE ALONE – Sunday June 10th 2012.

*If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
⁴ But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.
O Israel, hope in the Lord;
For with the Lord there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.*

Psalm 130:3-4;7

Beloved in the Lord,

The 4th verse of this 130th Psalm is very comforting indeed. The Psalmist writes: “But there is forgiveness with You.” These words should evoke within our hearts a great sense of gratitude. “But there is forgiveness with You.” Let us consider for a moment how things would be if this were not the case. If there was not forgiveness with God, then we would be living under the curse of death with no possible recourse. In the previous verse the Psalmist writes: “*If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*” The simple but blunt answer to this is no-one. If the Lord should mark iniquities, if He should hold us accountable for our sin, then we would all be condemned instantly. There is no sinless person apart from Jesus.

Paul makes this clear in Romans 3:23: “***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,***”. The word “all” means ALL. There are no exceptions. All of us are sinners and if The Lord were to mark inequities then we would all be punished. The penalty for sin is harsh. We read in Romans 6:23: “***For the wages of sin is death,***”. This is not simply speaking about physical death, but eternal death or Hell. Hell is to be eternally separated from God, in utter darkness, with no escape.

Back to our text: *If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
⁴ But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.”*

The words that follow the “but” are very important. The words that follow describe our God as a God of forgiveness and mercy and love. But with You there is forgiveness. This same truth is spelt out in Romans 6:23 which we partially cited earlier. This time the whole verse: “***For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***”

Here we also have the “but” and as in the previous case the words that follow are very comforting. Again they point to God’s love, mercy and grace. Yes it is true, if God were to

mark our iniquities and hold us accountable, then none of us could stand. We would be condemned to eternal death. But God is love, and mercy and grace. He does not desire to condemn us, He wants to save us. He wants to loose us from the bonds of sin and grant us eternal life in His house.

But, God could not and cannot and will not simply ignore sin. He cannot simply say: "I will ignore it, pretend it never happened. God is just and true. His law states that the wages of sin is death. His law states that without the shedding of blood there cannot be the forgiveness of sin.

In order to save us, but at the same time be true to His law God chose to place our sin upon Jesus His Son and make Him bear the penalty in our stead. ¹⁶ ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."*** John 3:16-17

This is very good news, great news in fact. Jesus did not come to judge but to save. Grace and grace alone. Jesus took our punishment, He bore our penalty, with His own Holy and precious blood He made the sacrifice, once for all time, for all people.

Because of Jesus sacrifice, God does not have to mark our iniquities any longer. Jesus blood is payment in full, for those who believe on Him.

To believe is much more than mental assent, it is placing our trust totally and fully in Him. It is understanding that only through the blood of Jesus can we be granted a pardon.

We must be absolutely clear that salvation is in no wise our merit or gain. We have not earned it, we do not deserve it because we are honest and upright. Salvation is all from God. It comes Sola Gratia – by grace alone.

For this very reason we owe God our total praise and thanksgiving, now and on into eternity.

Psalm 130 prompts us to fear the Lord. This means that we are to honour Him and to bring glory to His name, We must live each day in the knowledge that we are alive only because of His grace alone. Everything is totally dependent upon Him. We should thank Him every day for His bountiful grace and mercy, demonstrated to us through Jesus.

He has saved/ rescued us from outer darkness and brought us into His glorious light. He has saves us from being eternally lost. This is beautifully stated in Psalm 103:

***"Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;
³ Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;"***

Did you notice what it says here in verse three? He forgives all your iniquities, not some – ALL! He heals all your diseases, He saves your life from the pit. He does all these things through His Son Jesus. It is because of Jesus blood that we have forgiveness.

There is more: He crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion. There is enough material here to keep us praising God, here and in eternity,

When was the last time you stopped and thought about your life, your salvation? When was the last time you thanked Him for His grace and mercy? When was the last time you thanked God from the bottom of your heart and told Him that you love Him?

It is vital that we do this often. It is so important to realise every day that we live only by His Grace and love. The very air we breathe is His. The more we meditate upon these truths, the more we grow in Him.

Israel's problems always came when they forgot God who saved them. They very quickly turned away from Him and looked elsewhere.

The same happens in our lives. That is why David writes: ***"Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.² Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;***

If we lose sight of the fact that we live by Grace alone, we can very easily fall into error and get off the right course. We so easily become arrogant and begin to believe that God owes us something, because we are so special.

Paul writes to the Ephesians:

***"⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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 ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."* Ephesians 2:4-9**

Over and over again we are reminded of God's lovingkindness – His grace. Salvation does not originate with us, it is a gift from God. It is a gift of grace.

May we be clear on this point and may we never even for a moment entertain the thought, that we can have eternal life in Heaven apart from Jesus.

All things are from Him, through Him and to Him.

Let us be thankful everyday to our Heavenly Father for His grace and mercy.

As John Newton so beautifully wrote:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found was blind but now I see.

Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.