

## **Bedrock Beliefs Discussion Questions**

### **Sola Gratia: Grace Alone – Ephesians 2:1-10**

**Drawn from the November 5, 2023 sermon by Dr. Jeff Chandler**

Opener: Talk about one of the best gifts (birthday, Christmas, or out of the blue) you have ever received. What made it so exceptional?

#### **I. A false understanding of grace**

1. Pastor Jeff described several ways that Christians at the time of the Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century) believed they could access the blessings and grace of God: Through relics, the Lord's supper, and indulgences. What do you think was the greatest danger of these beliefs and what would have made them so popular?

#### **II. Why Grace? It cannot be collected, delegated nor purchased. It's a gift of God**

##### **A. The Diagnosis**

###### **Read Ephesians 2:1-3**

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*

2. What are some effects of being dead in transgressions and sins?

In Ephesians 2:2-3 Paul states we were under the control of three things in our old life of spiritual separation.

- The ways of the world (cultural values and goals which are opposed to God)
- The ruler of the kingdom of the air (the devil)
- The cravings, desires and thoughts of our flesh (sometimes translated as “sinful nature”)

Let's look more in depth at each of these:

### **The ways of the world (cultural values and goals which are opposed to God)**

#### **1 John 2:15-17**

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

3. Where does the course of this world take us? What about the world was (or is) particularly attractive to you?

### **The ruler of the kingdom of the air (the devil)**

#### **2 Corinthians 4:4**

*“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

#### **1 Peter 5:8**

*“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

4. What does the devil do to people? Have you ever sensed his spirit at work, either disturbing you or deceiving another person?

#### **John 8:44**

*Jesus said to those who were doubting him: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

5. Sometimes the devil tries to plant lies in our thoughts? Have you ever identified one of his lies?

## **The cravings, desires and thoughts of our flesh**

### **Galatians 5:17-21**

*“For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

6. Why do these “acts of the flesh (or “sinful nature”) keep a person from inheriting the kingdom of God? Why do you think God hates these behaviors so much?

Because of these three types of bondages and the lack of truth in our lives, Ephesians 2:3 says we were “by nature, children of wrath.” We were spiritually dead, with the part of us with the capacity to connect with God completely shut down. It’s very important to grasp how the chasm between our sin and God...between death and life, is bridged.

## **B. God’s Remedy**

### **Ephesians 2:4-5**

*“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions- it is by grace you have been saved.”*

### **Galatians 4:6**

“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

### **Romans 8:16**

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

God miraculously made the spiritual part of us come alive, and therefore be able to interact with his Holy Spirit! He sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts and helped us to intuitively know that we are his children. He started the ball rolling from his side, and enabled us to wake up. Notice that he did it even though we were knee deep “in transgressions”. We didn’t have to clean up first!

7. What has God's grace meant to you in your life? From what did it save you?

### **Ephesians 2:6-7**

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

There are three things mentioned that God did in saving us:

- He raised us up with Christ
- Seated us with Jesus in heavenly realms
- He showed the incomparable riches of his grace

Sometimes Grace is defined as God's Riches at Christ's Expense. These promises have a sense of present and future fulfillment about them. We have been made alive and are actually united with Jesus. We are now "in Christ" – a term that Paul uses throughout all of his letters. Colossians 1:13-14 expresses more about what this salvation means.

### **Colossians 1:13-14**

"He (the Father) has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

**In terms of the world:** We no longer need to set our affections on the motivations and purposes of our culture. Instead, we are kingdom people who live out God's desires and purposes. We are working with Jesus now!

**In terms of the devil:** We no longer need to fear or be influenced by his lies, because the Father has rescued us from the dominion of darkness!

**In terms of our sinful nature (flesh):** The deeds of the past are forgiven and done. We are now under new ownership (redeemed), and the past is not relevant or an offense any longer!

8. Share with one another how God has:

- moved your affections away from the world and into God's purposes
- dealt with fear, lies and bondage
- forgiven your past deeds and put them to rest

This is, in essence, your *testimony of God's grace in your life*. This is the story you want to be telling others who don't believe yet.

## C. The Result of Grace

### **Ephesians 2:8-10**

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

9. Comment on this idea that Pastor Jeff talked about: We are saved not **BY** our good works, but we are saved to **DO** good works – to share the mercy, kindness and life that God has given to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Group Prayer Time:** God's word keeps pointing us back to His truth if we take the time to explore it and apply it. Pray for each other and for more opportunities to share this powerful and wonderful news with those who don't understand it yet. By doing so, you'll be participating in the good works God has prepared for his church to do.

### **For Personal Reflection on your own:**

- A. Write out the ways you were separated from the life of God in the past. What is a sin that has been particularly troublesome?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. How has your life changed since you began to follow Jesus? Can you identify ways you are more spiritually alive or sensitive to the Holy Spirit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. Who are a few people in your life you might be able to share your faith story with? What would you tell them?

**Next week, November 12, pastor Jeff will cover “Sola Fide (Faith Alone)” and there will be discussion questions available in “Downloads” on the SCC website.**