

- One of God's stated purposes in saving us is that he might continue to show his grace forever — “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace.”

### Even our good works today are purely God's grace at work in us.

- *Poiēma* (workmanship) gives us our English word poem and means “creation” or “work of art.”
- Whatever good works we have were prepared by God.
  - We are his instruments as we walk in those good works he has prepared.
  - It is another act of God's grace that he allows us to be his instruments in this way.

### Why is this important?

- Merit only functions under law.
  - Without the law, there is no standard by which to judge merit.
  - But under the law, *any* transgression is worthy of punishment, and there can be no grace (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10)
- Even the smallest claim of merit robs God of some of his glory.

# Sola Gratia

## Ephesians 2:1-10

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- It misrepresents the Roman Catholic Church to say it does not teach grace.
- The Roman Catholic Church teaches that we are forgiven by God's grace but after that we begin to merit blessings (including heaven).

Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom (Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, paragraph 2010).

- But Scripture teaches that all of salvation is by God's grace alone:
  - When we were lost, we did not deserve to be saved.
  - When we were born again, we did nothing to contribute to our salvation.
  - As believers, we do nothing ourselves to earn the blessings associated with our salvation.

## We deserved nothing but wrath from God.

- Paul begins Ephesians 2 by describing our former condition as dead. What does he mean by dead?
  - The condition here refers to is spiritual.
  - In Ephesians 4:18, Paul describes those in this condition as “alienated from the life of God.”
  - Spiritual death means lacking the qualities of spiritual life — including any connection to God, who gives life (John 1:4).
  - Spiritual death means an allegiance to God’s enemies:
    - this world.
    - the devil (“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”).
    - your own flesh.
- Those in this state are children of wrath. The term “children of wrath” is like the term “sons of disobedience”:
  - It speaks to the closeness of the relationship.
  - It shows that this is based on *who you were* — your nature — not *just* what you’ve done.
- John MacArthur points out that trespasses and sins are the result of being dead.
  - You sinned *because* you were spiritually dead — it was your nature.
  - Because of that nature and the sin that proved it, God owed you nothing but his wrath.

## God saved us without any help from us.

- The words “But God” show the stark contrast between us and God (also see Genesis 50:20; Psalm 19:14-15; Psalm 73:26; Romans 5:6-7).
  - In contrast to our nature of sin and death, God’s nature is rich mercy and great love.
  - The word “even” (verse 5) emphasizes that God acted while we were still in that *dead* condition.
- Although everything about us opposed God, he made us alive together with Christ.
  - We didn’t meet God halfway (or even take one step in his direction).
  - We were headed in the opposite direction (see verse 2).
- Twice Paul tells us “by grace you have been saved.”
  - Paul emphasizes that this is a gift of God.
  - It is not your own doing.
  - If *any* of your works were involved, you would be able to boast.
  - As it is, all of the credit goes to God and none to you.
- This salvation did *not* just rescue us from our sin (and its penalty).
  - This salvation also “raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”
  - That accounts for *every* current and future blessing we receive.