

Welcome to Calvary Church, Brighton

3rd Dec 2017

"The importance of the Reformation for us today"

Grace - and grace alone

Speaker - Philip Wells full-time Elder

Sola power - saved by grace alone

www.calvary-brighton.org.uk

Sermons and talks - calvary-brighton.sermon.net



*The background is the
painting Luther's 95
Theses. Ferdinand
Pauwels, via Wikimedia
Commons*

Reformation - today!



- On October 31st 1517 Martin Luther (age - monk and theology teacher posted 95 discussion points on ~~Facebook~~ the door of the chapel in Wittenberg
- This can be identified as the trigger point for a cultural, political, economic and spiritual revolution for Europe
 - and then America, Africa etc.
 - we still reap the benefits today.
- Challenge the Catholic Church 1.5K old and called it corrupt?
- Disagree with the Pope and the Establishment?
- Say he found / rediscovered a better way?
- Five principles ("sola"= alone)
 - Faith alone, Grace alone, Christ alone, to the glory of God alone
 - Scripture alone
 - Sola fide, sola gratia, solo Christo, soli Deo gloria

How can I be right with God?



- I was a devout monk and wanted to force God to justify me because of my works and the severity of my life. I was a good monk, and kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, I would have gotten there as well. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I would have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other works.* [1] Walther von

Loewenich. Martin Luther: The Man and His Work. Trans. Lawrence E. Denef. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 72

How can I be right with God?

e.g. while he was walking the man gave my Dad's friend a punch in the face for no reason

- = "gratuitous", "for no reason"
- Q: What did you do to deserve it?
- A: nothing
 - nothing at all!
 - Good illustration of how God deals with sinners ... only in reverse!
 - Rather than word "gratuitous" or "freely" we use the word "grace"
 - Salvation is something which God gives by his grace



Plan:

- what is grace, why is grace alone important?

(1) the view of the Roman Catholic church that Luther escaped from

(2) the view that the Bible teaches

(3) final questions to clarify

The way of salvation

1. What did the Roman Catholic Church say about grace?

- *Yes of course salvation is by grace!*
 - *it's the oomph God gives us to enable us to live better*
 - *Like a strong coffee for an architecture student pulling an all-night study before finals*
 - *Like some help with the mortgage to enable a young couple to get on to the housing ladder*
 - *Rather unfair to pay whole thing*
 - *Rather humiliating ... own effort*



*Picture of
Pope Leo X*

The way of salvation

Maybe you think of God's grace like this ?

- *"Being a Christian is a matter of behaving well"*
 - ... behaving well enough to please God
- *"He helps me try harder so that I can be acceptable to him"*
 - God's grace takes me part of the way
 - But there is a gap ... something else needed?
- ==> *"Jesus Christ is a good example"*
- ==> *"I think I'm getting nearer to being a Christian"*
 - ==>but I'm never quite sure about it
 - ==> I don't seem to have the certainty and the inner joy that other Christians have
- *IS THAT THE WAY GOD'S GRACE WORKS*



The way of salvation

N.B. Before we look at grace in the Bible, please look at Bible's view of sin

- *A. non-existent - we just need to try harder*
- *B. a sort of sickness - from which we can be healed, then we are good enough*
- *C. a complete black hole - from which there is no escape. We can't see, can't move, and don't/can't want God in the slightest.*
- *See texts →*



*Jesus: John 3: 3,5
"unless a person is
born again he cannot
see the kingdom of
God ... cannot enter
the kingdom of God"*

*Ephesians 2:1 "you
were dead in
transgressions and
sins, in which you
used to live ... objects
of wrath*

The way of salvation

- 2. What does the Bible say about "grace" and us
- A: it says a lot!
 - OT and NT (x159 = 37+122)
 - Grace is **present** in OT
 - Favour .. so God acts in favour to someone
 - *The LORD the compassionate and gracious God ... Exodus 33:6*
 - Grace **explodes** in NT
 - Extreme and undeserved favour
 - Favour which is spread very widely across the globe (to undeserving)



Paul to Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions ... while we wait for ... our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave himself for us ..."

The way of salvation

See Paul's letter to Ephesians chapter 2

- 2:1-3 - plight/sin
 - Very bad: dead (1,5), followed (2), doing desires of sinful nature (3), following desires & thoughts, objects of wrath (3)
- God's intensive action
 - Made us alive with Christ (5)
 - Raised us up with Christ (6)
 - Seated us with Christ (6)
- What is the name for this, correct view?
 - v.5 it is by grace you have been saved
 - v.7 show the incomparable riches of his grace
 - v.8 it is by grace you have been saved
 - N.B. IS a gift (v.8), NOT own work (v.9)
 - = an act of [RE]Creation v.10
 - THAT'S GRACE



The way of salvation



- See Paul's letter to Ephesians chapter 1
- 1:3 he has [helped us find our own way?]
 - Blessed us ... with every spiritual blessing in Christ
 - He chose us [=apostles] (v.4)
 - He predestined us ... adoption-as-sons ... his plan/purpose/pleasure
 - ... to the praise of his glorious grace
 - ... freely given in the One he loves
- THAT'S GRACE!
- = deciding, acting, blessing
- ... NOT just helping us get a foot on the ladder of spiritual
- BUT wholesale deciding in his generosity to save us completely

The way of salvation



- Q1: So is this grace "a thing", like strong coffee
- A: **God's Riches at Christ's Expense??**
 - BETTER ... this grace is inseparable **Christ himself**
 - "in/through Christ" 1:3,5,6,7,9,10,11,13,13
 - "in/through Christ" 2:4,6,6,7,10
- Q2: Do we add to grace what it lacks, does it have gaps, blanks which we fill in ourselves
- A: in Jesus Christ there is no room left for anything more than grace
 - NOT grace = 75%, OTHER=25%
 - BUT grace ALONE, full 100%, all by grace
 - ==> *is that what you would say about how you have become a Christian?*

The way of salvation



- *Q3: But surely we have to earn it, seek and ask,*
- A: What God requires is for us to stop trying to earn merit and start trusting his promises to do what we cannot
 - specifically: that Christ has done all that is necessary and that if we receive him i.e. through faith in his promises, then all is found in him
 - Like the punch in the mouth ... we have done nothing to deserve his gift [of grace]
- *Q4: BUT BUT BUT - this is too easy! People will become Christians who have no intention of living a holy life, just carrying on unconcerned in sin*
- A: we receive Christ (rather than a thing) to have him is to have a whole new ownership, love, vision, relationship to self, relationship to the offers and ways of this world
 - "grace teaches us to say no to ungodly passions" Titus 2:11

The way of salvation



- Q5: And who gets the glory?
- A: - part for me?
 - NO!
- A: it's all God's kindness, so all the glory goes to him!
- Sola Deo gloria
- Is this where you are at?
- If not you need to ask this God of grace to do for you what you cannot do for yourself ... open blind eyes, make hard rebellious hearts soft and willing, to put love for Jesus into the heart that used to be indifferent
- Christ alone ... faith alone ... grace alone ... to God alone be the glory