

# *Sola Gratia*

2017 Convention of the  
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*Soli Deo Gloria*

Pastor Tony Pittenger

*In nomine Jesu*

As I greet you I should also formally introduce myself. My name is Tony Stark, yes; Tony Stark.

Tony Stark was made famous first through Marvel comic books and more recently through the Marvel Movie franchise.

An explosion has embedded shrapnel in Tony's chest, inches, possibly millimeters, from slicing his heart to bits. And that shrapnel is moving closer. A fraction of space or time is all that stands between him and death.

A cough may do it. A trip and fall could finish him off. A rush of adrenalin, joy, laughter, pleasure—these things could do it as well.

I know what you're thinking; just get it removed; no, it is too close to the heart. The world's best doctors have looked and x-rayed and researched and consulted...there is nothing they can do.

Again Dear Members and Friends of our dear ELS, I am Tony Stark except if there is a condition worse than the one described in comic lore, I have that. For me it's not metal. (Would that it were!) Would that my condition were only shrapnel seeking out my heart!

For me it's far worse. For me it's sin. Sin is embedded within me, that is within my flesh. My story is nowhere near as exciting as an explosion. For me it was just a piece of fruit hanging from a tree, one piece forbidden where millions were free for the eating.

But they took the forbidden one, and while that is a story you all know, that's how sin became embedded within me. Is it entwined in my DNA? Faultily coded and replicated in my genes? Those things are beyond me, but this I know: *A failing breath and I, in death's strong grasp may lie.*

That sin is always there. Sometimes it whispers to me and sometimes it shouts at me. It cozies up beside me pretending to be my friend and other times it roars at me to frighten me into compliance. No matter how, it is always there, only millimeters and seconds away from finishing me off and it draws closer with each passing day.

Convention Pages!

President Moldstad asked if I'd start things off with a question or two specifically for you. (Because the subject of this talk is very specifically for you.) So here is my question: When you think of what you know about God's grace, which Marvel or D.C. superhero might best represent you?

Batman? Captain America? The Hulk?

"Tales of Suspense", Issue #39, March 1963

Genesis 2:16–17, 3:6, 3:17, 3:19 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, *for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*"...

<sup>3:6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, *she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate...*

<sup>3:17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life... <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Genesis 5:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, *after his image*, and named him Seth.

Psalms 51:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

ELH 252:3

Death doth pursue me all the way; Nowhere I rest securely. He comes by night, he comes by day, and takes his prey most surely. *A failing breath and I, in death's strong grasp may lie, to face eternity for aye. Death doth pursue me all the way.*

Ecclesiastes 3:19–20 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

I might slip on the ice, a twister from a summer storm might reach down and do it. I might be a victim of a violent crime or it might be the consequence of my cholesterol laden snacks. It could happen in perhaps a billion different ways but in the end how won't really matter. That sin, embedded in my flesh, has doomed me.

*Death doth pursue me all the way.*

And don't even suggest operating on it. It won't work. It isn't in my hand or foot where I could lop off an appendage and be clean. Again, would that it were! Would that I could undergo some drastic surgical procedure and though I be lame or halt or stumble without depth perception at least I could be free of this curse to enter eternal life!

Because I'd do it! I am a coward at heart but still I'd do this. I'd work my tail off and save my money and after I'd recovered I'd go back to school and get my medical degree so that I could open a shop for salvation-surgery. You and I, we could go in as partners! Think of the millions we'd make! Filthy rich! Have anything we wanted...

And there you see for yourself, greed is just one of the many sins so deeply embedded that I naturally "go there." That enmeshed sin makes my heart evil from youth.

The sin's inoperable. There is absolutely nothing I nor any other person can do. I am Tony Stark.

But you've no doubt noticed that while sin has rendered me a wretched man and while my condition is terminal, I am standing before you alive! And if you grew up reading the comics, or more recently watching the movies, you know that Tony Stark is not dead either. Even though by all rights he and I should be, we're not.

Tony's got this thing. It was called a "magnetic field generator." As of late it's been called an "arc reactor." No matter. It's this thing which is also imbedded in his chest. And this outside, alien, external thing has stopped the progression of that shrapnel. Stopped it in its tracks.

Tony Stark should be dead and he would be dead if not for that external thing. That thing is the only reason he is alive. Remove it, break it, run it out of power, tamper with it, and he is dead; those shards of metal shred his heart and he is dead before he hits the floor.

But so long as that thing remains he does not die. His impending death is held in suspension even if just a hair's breadth

ELH 252:3

Death doth pursue me all the way; Nowhere I rest securely. He comes by night, he comes by day, and takes his prey most surely. *A failing breath and I, in death's strong grasp may lie, to face eternity for aye. Death doth pursue me all the way.*

Matthew 18:8-9 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Matthew 19:16 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, *what good deed must I do to have eternal life?*"

Acts 8:18-19 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

Genesis 8:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for *the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.* Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

Romans 7:18 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> For I know that *nothing* good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.

Romans 7:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am!* Who will deliver me from this body of death?

remains between him and his doom. With that thing the shrapnel does not do what shrapnel is intended to do.

And now that I've properly introduced myself we have finally arrived at the subject for today. Because just as for me it's not shrapnel but rather sin—neither for me is it a magnetic field generator or arc reactor.

For me it is grace. By grace I have been saved and it is the only thing keeping me alive. The only thing—grace alone—*sola gratia*. Separate me from grace, remove grace, mingle grace with anything else—anything else—with my works, with my efforts, with my goodness, my wishes, my intentions, my promises to be a better person tomorrow... tamper with grace, by adding any of my contributions or any of yours—and grace no longer works as designed and my sin continues to finish me off, damning me to hell.

*To face eternity for aye, death doth pursue me all the way.*  
More on this as we progress...

But here I stand (after all, I can do no other). Here I stand not dead and not damned; I woke this morning and I stand here because of grace. *Why stagger at this word of promise, hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?*

Grace alone. *Sola gratia. Sola scriptura. Sola fide.*

"Grace alone." Simple right? "Yes," but "no." *Sola gratia* quickly becomes complex stuff. Our own reason complicates it; our own pride, our own confidence in ourselves and in our potential... Man naturally takes grace and lays almost anything on hand alongside it. We lay claim to merit by clinging firmly to the law. The people in Galatia weren't unique.

These *solas* are the three rallying cries from Luther's "uncovering" of Scripture and what Scripture teaches. And you know his struggles prior to finding these three gems lying there in Scripture's pages. You know his guilt, his fear, his toil and labor, his resentment toward God, and then more guilt, more fear, more toil. Resentment grew into anger and even into hatred...

Ephesians 2:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—*by grace you have been saved.*

Romans 5:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

Romans 11:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, *it is no longer on the basis of works;* otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

ELH 252:3

Death doth pursue me all the way; Nowhere I rest securely. He comes by night, he comes by day, and takes his prey most surely. A failing breath and I, in death's strong grasp may lie, *to face eternity for aye. Death doth pursue me all the way.*

ELH 226:1

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless; My soul, believe and doubt it not. *Why stagger at this word of promise? Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught? Nay; then this word must true remain; By grace thou, too, shalt heav'n obtain.*

ELH 226:2

*By grace! None dare lay claim to merit; Our works and conduct have no worth.* God in His love sent our Redeemer, Christ Jesus, to this sinful earth; His death did for our sins atone, And we are saved by grace alone.

Galatians 2:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> I do not nullify the grace of God, for *if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

Galatians 5:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> You are severed from Christ, *you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.*

For we are so far from having merited anything that even *before this time we hated God.* For all our efforts, especially those with which we strive to merit grace, are inadequate and amount to nothing.

Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 30, pp. 294–295). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

What Luther found in Scripture was simple when contrasted with what he had been taught about grace. To the right is the subject of "grace" from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. First is their own definition, the subsequent outline is taken from the twenty pages following.

As we scratch the surface let me call attention to two things which should help understand Luther's predicament and should keep us on our task of *sola gratia*.

First look at *I. Actual Grace, B. Properties, 2. Gratuity*. When they speak and teach of merit, they mean exactly what it sounds like: some people have earned or deserved more of God's grace than others. So too prayer. You should expect to receive more grace if you pray more than others. And yet again with preparation. You can prepare yourself to receive God's grace by doing your own housecleaning. You could clean up your language, stop looking at other women (or other men), and you could give more to charity. Do these things and you can expect to receive Actual Grace in the same way the attentive and cheerful waitress expects a big tip from her patrons.

Luther was far too honest for this. He knew his preparatory efforts, prayers, and merit weren't from the heart. In his conscience he knew that his smile and sugary talk were fake. Luther was the crabby waitress who goes into the back and complains about you, the overbearing customers at Table 5.

Now look at *II. Sanctifying Grace, C. Characteristics of Sanctifying Grace*. This is the grace that actually saves a person but you see that it is uncertain. This account referenced in the Catholic Encyclopedia lays it out clearly:

*Pope Gregory the Great was asked by a pious lady of the court, named Georgia, to say what was the state of her soul. He replied that she was putting to him a difficult and useless question, which he could not answer. Because God had not vouchsafed to him any revelation concerning the state of her soul, and only after death could she have any certain knowledge of the forgiveness of her sins.*

*The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol VI Fathers—Gregory. "GRACE"*  
(pg. 708) Robert Appleton Company 1909

Gregory's answer contrasts sharply with what Paul and Silas told a pagan jailer one shaky night.

"What must I do?"

"Believe in the Lord Jesus."

Grace alone is Christ alone. His work. His substitution. His resurrection. *Favor Dei propter Christum*.

THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA:

grace -- /grās / "in general, a supernatural gift of God to intellectual creatures (men, angels) for their salutary acts or a state of holiness."

- I. Actual Grace
  - A. Kinds
    - 1. Graces of the Intellect
    - 2. Graces of the Will
      - a. Preventing Grace and Cooperating Grace
      - b. Efficacious Grace and Merely Sufficient Grace
    - 3. Graces of the Sensitive Faculties
  - B. Properties
    - 1. Necessity. Defended against:
      - a. Protestantism and Jansenism
      - b. Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism
    - 2. Gratuity
      - a. Merit
      - b. Prayer
      - c. Preparation
    - 3. Universality
      - a. Antecedent Will
      - b. Sufficient Grace for:
        - i. Just
        - ii. Sinners
        - iii. Infidels
- II. Sanctifying Grace
  - A. Preparation for Sanctifying Grace / Justification
    - 1. Conflict of Fiduciary Faith of Protestants
    - 2. Conflict of *Sola Fides* Doctrine of Protestants
    - 3. Non-Imputation Theory of Protestants
    - 4. Imputation Theory of Protestants
  - B. Nature of Sanctifying Grace
    - 1. Inner Nature of Sanctifying Grace
    - 2. Formal Operations of Sanctifying Grace
    - 3. Supernatural Retinue of Sanctifying Grace
  - C. Characteristics of Sanctifying Grace
    - 1. Catholic
      - a. Uncertainty
      - b. Inequality
      - c. Amissibility
    - 2. Protestant
      - a. Absolute Certainty
      - b. Complete Equality of All Justified
      - c. Unforfeiteness

*The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol VI Fathers—Gregory. "GRACE"*  
(pp. 689-709) Robert Appleton Company 1909

Acts 16:30-31 (ESV)

<sup>30</sup> Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*" <sup>31</sup> And they said, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.*"

God's love because of Christ

The outline also teaches that Sanctifying Grace (saving grace) is distributed with inequality. This is explained because Rome realizes that the only other alternative is "that we are all equal to Mary the Mother of God and just as holy as she."

This was the "grace" Luther was raised with (or lack of it), though it hadn't been systematized in this kind of detail. What we find in the Catholic Encyclopedia is largely the Council of Trent's response to Luther.

In Scripture (alone) Luther found that even Mary had to be saved by grace. Therefore you and the Blessed Virgin are equal in God's eyes!

Grace. It is taught in Scripture, but not in a clinical sense. Rather it is something "seen" in Scriptural accounts and something known in Scripture's declarations. Let me show you what I mean...

In the Old Testament we usually find it as the translation of the Hebrew word חַן.

In the New Testament it is often the Greek word χάρις.

In both Old and New these words are usually translated as "love, favor, kindness, goodness, goodwill, gift". Again, usually, but not always.

Saint Paul uses some form of the word χάρις more than 70 times in his writings, more than 20 times he uses the word along with the word "give, gave", or "given." "Grace given to me" seems to be a particular favorite of his. (No surprise when we remember that he's the guy who woke up one morning planning on persecuting the Church of Christ and grace had "everything" to do with how differently that day ended.)

χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι  
 χάριν τῆν δοθεισάν μοι  
 χάριν σου θεοῦ τῆν δοθεισάν μοι

Even you who do not read Greek can see the consistency. δοθείσης, δοθεισάν is "give". It's not "won", not "earned", not "deserved, merited, owed," or any other such personal involvement. "Give", the recipient remain passive; he/they/we, only receiving the gift.

"If man, as the Protestant theory of justification teaches, is justified by faith alone, by the external justice of Christ, or God, the conclusion which Martin Luther (*Sermo de Nat. Mariae*) drew must follow, namely that 'we are all equal to Mary the Mother of God and just as holy as she.'" The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol VI Fathers-Gregory. "GRACE" (pg. 708) Robert Appleton Company 1909

"But, in consequence of modern controversies regarding grace, it has become usual and necessary in theology to draw a sharper distinction between the transient help to act (actual grace) and the permanent state of grace (sanctifying grace)." The Catholic Encyclopedia Vol VI Fathers-Gregory "GRACE" (pg. 689) Robert Appleton Company 1909

Romans 3:23-24 (ESV)  
<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Esther 2:17 (ESV)  
<sup>17</sup> the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won *grace* and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Psalms 45:2 (ESV)  
<sup>2</sup> You are the most handsome of the sons of men; *grace* is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever.

Psalms 86:6 (ESV)  
<sup>6</sup> Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for *grace*.

Jeremiah 31:2 (ESV)  
<sup>2</sup> Thus says the Lord: "The people who survived the sword found *grace* in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest.

Zechariah 4:7 (ESV)  
<sup>7</sup> Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!

Romans 12:3 (ESV)  
<sup>3</sup> For by the *grace given to me* I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Galatians 2:9 (ESV)  
<sup>9</sup> and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the *grace that was given to me*, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

1 Corinthians 3:10 (ESV)  
<sup>10</sup> According to the *grace of God given to me*, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

But don't fail to see what is, and what isn't, happening. The Bible is not a dictionary we open to find the precise definition of the word. We come to know grace through Scripture's declarations about it and through its stories which display it.

- God calls to the sinners cowering behind their fig leaves, not to give them what they deserve, but to tell them about the Seed Born of Woman who would crush the serpent's head. \_\_\_\_\_ Genesis 3
- God makes a blood covenant with Abraham but it is a one-sided covenant. Father Abraham is a passive recipient/observer. \_\_\_\_\_ Genesis 15
- The Shepherd simply searches for His lamb until He finds it and on the way home the only talk heard is talk of celebrating and rejoicing. He has no lecture about what a stupid lamb she was to wander so far off in the first place and how He hopes she's really learned a lesson *this* time because this was a real inconvenience for Him. \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 15:1-7
- Jesus looks up into the sycamore tree and simply tells Zacchaeus, "I must stay at your house today." \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 19:1-10
- The Lost-and-Dead Son returns home to find his Father had been scanning the horizon lo these many weeks/months/years simply because the Father longed for at least one more chance to show love to His child. \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 15:1-2, 11-20
- And when that Father won't even hear the foolish plans the son has for working and earning his keep, but rushes to restore the son to his place and to dress him in Dad's best, we see what grace looks like in a home and in a family. \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 15:1-2, 21-24
- And because Saul woke up one morning on the road to Damascus breathing out threats against God's Church with every intention of that day being another day of persecuting Christ, but because that day ended oh so differently than he intended and oh so graciously different than Saul deserved, St. Paul is well-qualified to tells us that grace is a gift given and unearned so that none of us can boast about ourselves. \_\_\_\_\_ Acts 9:1-19

Ephesians 2:4-9 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in *mercy*, because of the *great love* with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—*by grace you have been saved*—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved* through faith. And this is *not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That's just a small sampling of Scripture's presentation of grace. Our confessions too speak of it often. What follows are just a few instances:

- "It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith."
- "All ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel."
- "Without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God."

Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church](#). (Augsburg Confession, Article IV: Justification p. 30). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

Moreover it is taught that *all ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel* and the teaching about faith in Christ.

Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church](#). (Augsburg Confession, Article XV: Ecclesiastical Rites p. 36). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

But *without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God*, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart.

Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church](#). (Augsburg Confession, Article XVIII: Free Will p. 39). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

And because grace is given through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and because Grace is Christ, it should not surprise us that there is no end to Luther's comments about it.

- "Forget about cowl, tonsure, rope, et., and consider grace alone."
- "Christ has regard for no one because of his pile of guldens, his beauty, his wisdom, his golden hair, or because he wears a garment embroidered in gold or silver, or a gray coat. No, it is grace alone that counts."
- "These two words, "grace" and "peace," contain a summary of all of Christianity. Grace contains the forgiveness of sins, a joyful peace, and a quiet conscience. But peace is impossible unless sin has first been forgiven, for the Law accuses and terrifies the conscience on account of sin. And the sin that the conscience feels cannot be removed by pilgrimages, vigils, labors, efforts, vows, or any other works; in fact, sin is increased by works. The more we work and sweat to extricate ourselves from sin, the worse off we are. *For there is no way to remove sin except by grace. This deserves careful notice. For the words are easy; but in temptation it is the hardest thing possible to be surely persuaded in our hearts that we have the forgiveness of sins and peace with God by grace alone, entirely apart from any other means in heaven or on earth.*

This is the Word of grace and promise, which does not demand anything of us as in the Law, but offers *plenary satisfaction through the perfect victim, Christ, the victim* who put an end to Moses and the whole Law. Therefore David so freely rejects the imperfect sprinkling of the Law and asks to be sprinkled not by the Levitical priest, but by God the Redeemer Himself so that his conscience might be cleansed with a cleanness that is whiter than snow.

Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 12: Selected Psalms I](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 12, p. 366). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

*Forget about cowl, tonsure, rope, etc., and consider grace alone.* The ungodly go their way and make a bewitched god out of a girdle, something sealed with a bull, or something placed into a shrine. A barefoot monk's god is the contemplation of God in heaven who might have regard for his rope. Another does something else, and each one fashions God according to his own ideas. I therefore admonish you that in all such places of idolatry you pay close attention, because all religion that is the product of one's thought arises from this ungodliness. Before God this alone is religion: the forgiveness of sins.

Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 17: Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 40-66](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 17, pp. 112-113). Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

*Christ has regard for no one because of his pile of guldens, his beauty, his wisdom, his golden hair, or because he wears a garment embroidered in gold or silver, or a gray coat. No, it is grace alone that counts.* His is to be a kingdom of grace, belonging to those who are wretched and poor, whether they be men or women, rich or poor.

Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 22: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 22, pp. 190-191). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 26, pp. 26-27).

Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.



- "In all the indulgence bulls he promises forgiveness of sins to all those who have repented and confessed. This is the worst poison and most harmful seduction emanating from that supreme seducer, the pope, and from his masks. Christ, Matthew 9[:2], did not say to the paralytic, "If you put money in the box your sins are forgiven... The accursed pretension of such bulls is abominable beyond imagining, because it condemns and destroys God's first and foremost commandment, namely, the commandment which teaches trust in God's grace alone."
- "By grace alone are we saved. God doesn't want to be obligated to anybody."

Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 54: Table Talk*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 54, p. 91). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Luther even sees a shocking lesson on grace in the expulsion of Abraham's naturally born (and sinfully/faithlessly conceived) son, Ishmael.

Our own Norwegian father, U.V. Koren, speaks well of grace. In his 1890 essay he says, *"the only reason we can hope to be saved is because salvation from the very first to the very last is an entirely free and unmerited gift merely and solely by grace alone."*

C.F.W. Walther also has plenty to say on the subject. In his *Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, you can hardly turn a page without finding something; so closely connected are grace and the Gospel and so dependent was Walther on them. Here is one of my favorites: *Yonder we shall see—and marvel—that there has not been an hour when God did not work in us to save us, and that there has not been an hour when we wanted to be saved. Indeed, we are forced to say to God: "Thou alone hast redeemed me; Thou alone dost save me."*

Walther, C Th D. (1991) *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (pp.40-41) Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing Company.

Alone. Thou alone. Grace and grace alone. I'll share one more quote from one more Lutheran patriarch and then try to speak less theoretically.

*In all the indulgence bulls he promises forgiveness of sins to all those who have repented and confessed. This is the worst poison and most harmful seduction emanating from that supreme seducer, the pope, and from his masks. Christ, Matthew 9[:2], did not say to the paralytic, "If you put money in the box your sins are forgiven." Rather, he said, "Be of good courage," or, "Trust firmly and your sins are forgiven." These wolves and damned masks tear people away from this blessed faith and trust in God's sheer grace which alone grants forgiveness of sins. Instead, they lead people to put their trust in bulls, paper, and money so that simple minds learn to rely on their own works and not on God's grace. The accursed pretension of such bulls is abominable beyond imagining, because it condemns and destroys God's first and foremost commandment, namely, the commandment which teaches trust in God's grace alone. They teach trust in paper and wax, that is, in their invalid and accursed lies.*  
Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 39, pp. 275-276). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

There was no other remedy for crushing the pride in merits and prestige unless Ishmael, together with his mother, were cast out of the holy church of God, which was in the house of Abraham. But if this did not take place without great grief and many tears, yet the fruit which resulted was far greater; for in this way they attain grace and are saved. This is the purpose of such a pitiful expulsion: God wants to teach us that we are saved by grace alone or by faith alone. Faith takes hold of the grace that is set before us in the promise. For the natural children are to be regarded as equal with those who are not natural children and yet believe. So there is one God of the Jews and of the Gentiles. The Jews should not boast of their prerogative according to the flesh, and the Gentiles should not despair because of their sins.  
Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 4: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 4, p. 60). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

"We, least of all men, can endure to have anyone deny the universality of grace—we who have learned to know that we can do absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing, to obtain salvation, so that *the only reason we can hope to be saved is because salvation from the very first to the very last is an entirely free and unmerited gift merely and solely by grace alone*. He who believes that he himself can help, even ever so little, by his acceptance of grace or by his non-resistance, etc.;—that he consequently in some way or other is not quite as great a sinner as others,—he may yet think that he has hope—for he has still a little in himself on which to base his hope; but he who with Paul has acknowledged (not only said) that he is the greatest of all sinners would have to despair if the radiant glory of the Gospel,—this, that it is for all, for all sinners,—did not disperse the darkness and draw and beckon him along the way to God."  
Koren, U, Th D. (1953) *Faith of our Fathers: Doctrinal Articles: What the Norwegian Synod Has Wanted and Still Wants: The Doctrine of God's Grace*. (pp. 68-69) Frederic, Wisconsin: Lutheran Synod Book Company

If, then, you realize that there are times in your Christian life when the inner corruption of the heart silences the voice of Christ, then remember that the disciples had the same experience, in spite of the fact that He spoke to them as being "clean." Herein lies the whole force of our text. Consider: It is He who calls them clean, whose eyes are as flames of fire, who one day shall judge the quick and the dead. He designates them as "clean" at the moment when He foretells their defection and disloyalty. That same evening on the road to Gethsemane together with the Master, they quarreled as to who should be the greatest among them; when in His agony He sweat great drops of blood, they could not watch with Him, however much He begged them to do so; when He was arrested, they fled; when He made a "good confession," Peter denied His Lord. Now note, that of these weak disciples the Lord said that they were clean through the Word which He had spoken to them.

Those bumbling fools were clean through the Word which He had spoken to them. That's grace alone; it had nothing to do with what they did or didn't do that night. It's *favor Dei*, the favor of God.

Grace alone—grace in Christ, for Scripture teaches that it is found in nothing else: not in my parents, my ancestors, or in me; not in the good I do or in the evil I don't do. Not in any of our externals, no it is free. Freely and equally given to the Blessed Virgin, to cowardly deniers and escapees; even to me. Our grace; our holiness is in Christ, even Christ alone. (Call it *sola Christus* if you like.)

Grace then became who these people were: Peter and the other disciples, Paul, Luther, and the rest. Men and women not dead in spite of themselves; men and women who were alive only because of God's grace toward them, pre-comic book versions of Tony Stark.

And Convention Pages, here I'll propose to explain the answer to the superhero question I posed some 30 minutes ago. Do you know why Batman isn't a good analogy of who you are by grace? Because Bruce Wayne made the Batman. He studied and trained for years; his discipline, his time in the weight room and in the dojo, his ingenuity in the R&D department at Wayne Industries.

No, Batman is self-made. That's not you and that's not me. And Captain America was already a good guy at heart. That serum certainly amplifies his strength and his resolve but Steve Rogers started off as a gentleman and a patriot. Not me.

(Rosenius continues...)

Oh, let me never forget this blessed fact! Here I see the very heart of the Gospel, its great central doctrine—justification by faith alone. Here I see the whole import of the heavenly message, "The blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." It runs counter to all reason, that unclean and sinful creatures such as we all are should nevertheless be clean before God. In the presence of this stupendous fact, I begin to realize that the blood of Jesus means more to God than it does to us, more to the angels of heaven than to us sinners on earth. We have not the eyes to see its overwhelming power. We despise and reject Him. We esteem Him not. But God esteems Him who shed His blood for the sin of the world, and has given Him all power and dominion.

Rosenius, C.O. (1923) *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God—Excerpts from the Writings of C.O. Rosenius with the Assistance of Bishop N.J. Laache—Reproduced by George Taylor Rygh* (pp. 312-313) Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House

"Our holiness is in Heaven, where Christ is—not in the world before the eyes of everybody, like a piece of goods in the marketplace. All this simply means: "Our life is hid with Christ in God."...It is in the nature of man to look only at externals, at those things which may be seen with the physical eyes...That alone which is the greatest treasure of our hearts, the heavenly and external, can not be seen—it remains hidden...There are times when this fact becomes an ordeal to us. It is necessary that we keep in our hearts these words of the apostle: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." *Ibid* (pg. 354)

Romans 5:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Ephesians 1:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

Titus 2:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

John 1:16-17 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

And not the Hulk either. It's true you wouldn't like me when I'm angry (my wife and kids sure don't) but my rage can't be used for any good. When I'm mad I'm just an angry, petty, selfish, and destructive weakling, I'm no David Banner.

I really think it's Tony Stark, a self-centered arrogant jerk who's supposed to be dead but isn't. But before I go any further in telling you about people who are not just "not-dead" but who are actually alive, I must say something about the other side of grace alone.

Because I've found that there are two. Grace alone for me must also mean grace alone for the people in my life—the people who sin against me—even all people. It is universal and the mark of the Lutheran Church. But *sola gratia* for others is hard, just ask Jonah.

Why do we forgive? The last time you said, "I forgive you," why did you? Did the word "forgive" come out of your mouth because somewhere, deep down, you were hoping, even expecting, that your words of forgiveness would compel them into behaving better? Were you expecting that your grace would induce a sense of guilt to motivate him to shape up?

It is natural to see grace the way Rome does, something earned and deserved, something that *darn-well had better make some changes around here, and soon!* But there is a difference between telling the broken one "I forgive you" because you just found yourself in the position of the Prodigal's father and there may be no more divine position to be in, and between telling that same broken one "I forgive you" because you just want them to treat you better.

Forgiveness must have no strings attached. None for me and none for anyone else. Alone means alone. What we find in Scripture is a God who forgives because it is a divine thing to do. He shows love and gives grace just for Jesus' sake, not because He's sick and tired of your antics and really just wants to see you behaving better.

(Don't get me wrong, grace has something to do with behavior change, just not the way we think it does.)

Grace is not a spiritual muscle God's blessed you with. Evangelical America can illustrate what I mean for they imagine grace to be something given by God but something which you must now tone and firm. After all, can't you do all things through Christ who strengthens you and didn't God promise you a victory through Jesus?

Grace in Christ is for all people. *It is a mark of the Lutheran church to confess that God's saving grace for sinners is universal* (John 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:4). The whole world's debt of sin was once for all covered and cancelled because of the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ. Not all people personally believe this and unfortunately are therefore lost. Yet, the debt of sin for every person has been declared forgiven in the hall of God's justice and is truly offered freely for every person to hold as one's own.

Moldstad Pres. J Jr. comments to author re: Formula of Concord, Article XI: Eternal Foreknowledge and Divine Election, para 28.

Jonah 4:1-3 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

In the process of justification we must distinguish two periods: first, the preparatory acts or disposition (faith, fear, hope, etc.); then the last, decisive moment of the transformation of the sinner from the state of sin to that of justification or sanctifying grace...with this the real process comes to an end, and the state of habitual holiness or sonship of God begins...The Church teaches that justification consists of an actual obliteration of sin and an interior sanctification.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol VI Fathers—Gregory.* "GRACE" (pg. 701) Robert Appleton Company 1909

In active justification an actual and real forgiveness takes place to that the sin is really removed from the soul and it is repugnant that God should declare any one free from sin to whom sin is still actually cleaving.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol VI Fathers—Gregory.* "GRACE" (pg. 703) Robert Appleton Company 1909

"The grace according to which God is mercifully minded toward sinful mankind is according to Scripture not absolute grace, that is, grace independent of any cause, resting simply on God's omnipotence. . . By grace God resolved to send His only begotten Son to be the substitute of sinful men and that He in our stead should fulfill that righteousness which God demanded from us (Gal. 4:4-5). . . By His life, suffering and death Christ has appeased God's wrath, and everlasting justice is satisfied by His intervention. (2 Cor. 5:21) (Rom. 5:18-19). . . When God raised Christ from the dead, He absolved the world of its sin and guilt and declared that He was no longer at odds with the sinful race of man. That is His grace" (Lutheran Synod Quarterly, vol. 43:2&3, p. 244).

Philippians 4:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You won't see a monk's cowl or tonsure. Now you'll see lycra and spandex but the error remains. "Grace" was a thing given to you so that you can perform at a higher level than before. The Reformed do this to themselves; I do it to my kids. Christ is no longer the angry judge He was in medieval days, now He is an annoyingly energetic life-coach or accountability partner, but the underlying expectation is the same. "Grace" is all about you and about your performance.

These souls are no more certain about their salvation than the woman who walked away from Pope Gregory. They cower in the same fear as Luther did back in that summer storm of 1505. No matter how fashionably the Law is dressed, it is still the Law and the Law kills sinners.

Dr. Rod Rosenblatt speaks about these souls in his essay: *The Gospel for Those Broken by the Church*. He calls these people "the sad alumni of Christianity." They are people who were saved by grace alone but who imagine—or *who have been told*—that they remain saved by their own works.

Leaving the gym for the creek we find something different. God's people are better compared to trees. Trees and other plants thrive on light and on water. And if Jesus is the Light of the World and if He is the Water of Life, then God's people will thrive and grow when they are rooted in the Word made flesh. Yes, walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing alongside sinners, and sitting with scoffers still is detrimental and deadly to our salvation but at the same time salvation is not a muscle that you can tone and firm.

Grace and grace alone. Christ. The Gospel. This is how God's new creations grow. God just forgives. God just shows love. God gives grace and He gives it just for Jesus' sake, not mine. His grace is not a sacred lever, some Archimedian pry bar, which if He or I can just exert the right amount of pressure on our end that grace can be used to manipulate people—or ourselves—into behaving better.

Grace is the tattered lamb being carried back to the fold. It is the son collapsing in his father's arms while Dad's calling for a celebration. Grace is Jesus who eats and drinks with sinners and tax collectors.

Contrary to popular (and past) opinion, grace alone isn't given with the ulterior motive of behavior modification. That being stated and restated, we find in Scripture that in reality grace does produce behavior.

"We are pretty sure that unbelievers who come to believe this are instantly justified in God's sight, declared as if innocent, adopted as sons or daughters, forgiven of all sin, given eternal life, etc. But are *Christians* still saved that freely? Or are we not? We are pretty clear that imputed righteousness saves sinners. But can the imputed righteousness of Christ save a Christian? And can it save him or her all by itself? Or no? I think the way we answer this question determines whether we have anything at all to say to the "sad alumni" of Christianity."

Rosenblatt, R. Ph T. *The Gospel for Those Broken by the Church* (pg. 10)

<https://www.1517legacy.com/freebies/Rosenblatt-The%20Gospel%20For%20Those%20Broken%20By%20The%20Church.pdf>

Psalms 1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. <sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; <sup>6</sup> for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

John 1:4 & 9 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and *the life was the light of men...* <sup>9</sup> The true light, *which gives light to everyone*, was coming into the world.

John 4:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. *The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*"

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Luke 15:1-4 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "What man of you, having a hundred sheep...

The freedom of *sola gratia* does, in fact, produce fruit. This fruit is not compelled or forced; it isn't fruit grown for fear or grown for bragging rights. No, this is no such mealy paltry crop. This is 100% natural fruit of the sweetest kind because while fruit isn't grace's purpose—this fruit is grace's by-product.

Remember, my alter-ego is Tony Stark, a man who should be dead but isn't, a man whose sin should have miscarried him but didn't. Here I stand because of grace alone.

If you know Tony Stark, you know he goes by another name. He is also called Iron Man because here's the thing: that same device which is preventing his death is also empowering him, empowering him to do things plain-old Tony Stark never could do. On his own he's not a nice person to be around or to be in a relationship with. But with that external thing preventing his death Tony Stark becomes a hero. He becomes noble, even sacrificial, all because of that thing outside himself.

Scripture says it's like that with me too. Not only does God's grace prevent my doom; it also enlivens and empowers me to do things I simply could not do as plain old Tony Pittenger. I am of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, part of a holy nation. I am a saint. Clean because Christ declares me clean and alive because the Spirit gives birth to spirit. I am Iron Man.

The grace of who we are and how we live in Christ is a recurring theme in the liturgy of Church.

- Matins & Vespers: *grace for true repentance and amendment of life.*
- Rite I (Bugenhagen's order): *and to grow day by day in grace and holiness.*

Yes, I can love. It might still be clumsy and rudimentary but by grace none of my failures are being tracked, logged, and counted against me. I'm completely free to try to love like that father in Luke 15, to be good for goodness' sake, and I can turn to my fellow man (or my kid) and just love them. Not in hopes of guilting them into being more loveable but simply because I am free to love them and because they might be thirsty or naked or sick or in prison.

Remember, I'm saved by grace alone, not by my works. While I can't boast of them neither is God tracking and tallying my works toward some annual quota.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

2 Corinthians 6:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 Corinthians 8:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

2 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> But you are a *chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession*, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

P: The almighty and merciful Lord has granted us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins, *grace for true repentance and amendment of life*, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray You to open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and death, and to *grow day by day in grace and holiness*. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Ephesians 3:7-9 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, *though I am the very least of all the saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

Matthew 25:35-36 (ESV)

<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

In truth and in fact it works very differently than reason expects it to. It works like this—We love because he first loved us.  
1 John 4:19 (ESV)

**We.**

For if you are Tony Stark, if your body and your soul are hopelessly embedded with sin, and if *death doth pursue you all the way*, then know this: You are Iron Man as well. Not only has God's grace prevented your doom, your life has been saved to be lived! You are alive again to live in the Father's house and you are alive to live here on the face of the Father's creation.

Grace empowers you! Not only does Paul's phrase "by the grace given me" tell us that he contributed nothing, it goes on to tell us what God's grace is doing through him. It is the source of gifts such as serving, teaching, and leading, and if you really want to talk about work that appears to be super and heroic Paul tells us that grace is how and why he is a minister to the Gentiles where he endured beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks; even snake bite!

And so we take on a third personality, the flesh and blood boy named Pinocchio. For we are alive; not made of wood. God is no master puppeteer controlling our actions. *I had strings, but now I'm free, there are no strings on me.* No, we live and move by grace. The strings are cut; we are free and freed children of the Heavenly Father.

And here's something else: As those flesh-and-blood children, your nose won't grow for every lie nor will your Savior punish you for your failures. You are saved by grace alone, not works; don't boast and don't despair.

Because you will still sin. *Simul iustus et peccator* remains true so long as we remain in the flesh but Jesus declares that the Spirit gives birth to spirit and you are already clean because of the Word He has spoken.

Grace alone. Nothing earned or needing earning. Nothing added or in need of adding. Not me, my past or my promised future. Just Christ. Just grace.

*By grace! On this I'll rest when dying; In Jesus' promise I rejoice; For though I know my heart's condition, I also know my Savior's voice. My heart is glad, all grief has flown, Since I am saved by grace alone.*

Ephesians 2:1–10 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ—by grace* you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

1 Corinthians 15:10 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

I've got no strings, to hold me down, to make me fret, or make me frown. *I had strings, but now I'm free, there are no strings on me.*

Pinocchio, (1940) *Walt Disney Studios*, based on: The Adventures of Pinocchio, (1880) *Carlo Collodi*

*Abide with us Lord, for it is evening and the day is far spent. Abide with us and with Your whole Church. Abide with us in the end of the day, in the end of our life, and in the end of the world. Abide with us with Your grace and goodness, with Your holy Word and Sacrament, with Your strength and blessing. Abide with us when the night of affliction and temptation comes upon us, the night of fear and despair when death shall come. Abide with us and with all the faithful through time and eternity.*

ELH 226:9

*Soli Deo Gloria*