

Sola Fide
Romans 1:16-17

Romans 1:15–19 (ESV) ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*** ¹⁷ ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*** ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

Intro:

{As Kevin mentioned last week...} There are five phrases that are sometimes used to describe the convictions of the Reformers: sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus, soli deo Gloria. Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. “Scripture is our ultimate authority and it teaches us that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone.

Luther had done lots of things to try and *get* God’s righteousness. (examples—and how they all fell short—Staupitz hurts for him)

Then he comes to the little passage I want us to look at this morning. This little passage helps ignite the Reformation. Martin Luther and this passage (Bainton): First, his wrong interpretation, in his own words:

- Why is the “gospel” good news? That’s what Luther wanted it to know.
- When he thought about God’s righteousness, it scared Luther.
- So, this message that talked about God’s righteousness...it wasn’t good news for Luther...it was bad news!

But then he realizes what the passage is saying (sum up in his own words).

This passage:

- Gospel is good news to proclaim
- God’s power has brought about the promised salvation (from Genesis 3 and throughout
- Gospel proclaims how you can receive God’s righteousness through faith (Genesis 15 and Habakkuk); what the phrase “from faith for faith” means...
- {a quote regarding his thoughts on “faith alone.”}

Struggle: What does that mean for us this morning. How do I approach this idea of “faith alone”?

- 1517: the struggle was: I need to work in order to be found acceptable to God. Faith is important, His work on the cross vital, but I need to merit that grace. God may begin the process, but through the sacraments, I continue to receive the righteousness I need. **My works produce righteousness. Didn’t understand faith in Christ.**
- What is the struggle in the church today {think through stuff in 9Marks books}?

I could tick off the doctrinal “points” of sola fide. But that wouldn’t be helpful. At our church, I don’t think there is the same preoccupation with works. But we also misunderstand what “faith” is. Churches full of people who (1) assume that because they are aware of Jesus or agree with some facts about Jesus, they’re saved. Misunderstood faith and coming to Christ in relationship. They think of faith as more like signing a contract. I believe this message is true, I prayed a prayer, “sola fide, baby,” so I’m good. **Ill:** warranty on a car; Pens during WWII and their guarantees (we’ll unpack as we go); (2) don’t know how to share the gospel. **We’re not proclaiming the good news of the gospel and calling people to trust in our glorious Christ alone. We’re saying things like: Jesus wants to be your friend; Jesus wants to make you happy;** (3) Practicing some mixture of trusting in Christ *and* trying to earn their salvation. (4) Think because we don’t do work, there is no work necessary for salvation.

- Again: I want us to look at this passage that helped ignite the Reformation and then ask three questions.
- **CENTRAL IDEA: You are justified—forgiven of your sins and declared to be righteous by God—when you place your faith only in Jesus Christ for eternal life.**

Three questions to help us understand what we mean by “faith alone” and what we need to do with this truth

What do we need to be saved?

1. Definition of “saved” (v. 16...and v. 18)

Illustration

2. Various answers to that question

- Luther’s Day: indulgences
- 2017: not in any danger. (Ill: Weds morning and the reality of my sin.)
 - Ill: the danger a person is in who doesn’t think they are in any danger (sailing, runner)

3. But the right answer is: we need righteousness. Under wrath and need someone to look at us and declare: “NOT GUILTY.” (passage)

- Not just playing pretend: Kids and simply declaring something “clean;” Government and declaring something “paid for;” Just changing the definition of something.

Some people think believing in Jesus means you’ve jumped through the right hoop and now God will give you a pass.

- Need better illustration or delete: Ill: Like those tests the teacher used to give that said, read all the directions first, blah, blah, blah, and then last direction is to write your name on the top left and then just turn in the test. {need a better illustration here, but the idea is there...faith isn’t just a “trick” to get out of what you deserve. *You need to be righteous!*
- To declare someone “not guilty” means to “justify” them. To declare them in the right.

- So: (1) we're in line of God's wrath because He is righteous and we are not. (2) Our need is to *become* righteous.
4. So the need is quite profound. A need that is unable that we are absolutely unable to meet. (**Ill of crushing debt**).

Application: Talking to people and there is an absolute unawareness of how their day to day lives are affected to and related to eternity. Listening to the Gospel of Luke this past week and the challenges he gives are profound.

{Transition: so, how then should we split up the work required for salvation?

What has Christ done to save us?

1. Christ has done it all. Everything. Nothing left to do.
2. How Scripture describes Christ's work.
 - Passive Obedience
 - Active Obedience
 - Completely Righteous
 - Offers the ability to be *in Him*. ***Double Imputation***. Illustrate and talk through the implications of this!!!

Ill: working on a project with my FIL...nothing left for me to do. Going Christmas shopping with Whitney. I want to be involved, but my usefulness limited.

But even in those situations, there is always some bone they can throw me. Some trifling contribution I can make. When my kids help me work on the car (get better illustration), there is always some way they can contribute.

Ill: regarding the *grounds* for confidence in something.

App: But that's not the case here.

So, we know what we need: righteousness/justification. We know the *grounds* for our justification. How do we *get* it?

{Transition: So...he's done it all. There is absolutely no work left to be done.}

What do we need to do to be saved?

And that reality that we've just discussed, is why "faith alone" must be the means God uses to save people. {there's no more work to be done and our response to God must reflect that reality}. What's the difference between question number 1 and question number 3?

1. What true, biblical faith is *not*

“believe” = hope against evidence.

“believe” = agree with the truth of something but it has no claim on me.

Just knowledge of the gospel.

Just agreement with the gospel. “Yeah, I agree with that.”

2. What true, biblical faith is: **trusting in Jesus Christ alone for my salvation**

You are justified—forgiven of your sins and declared to be righteous by God—when you place your faith in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life

Want you to think about that statement, and I just want to say a few more things to help you think and meditate on that statement.

- Technically: I’m not just saved by faith...I’m saved by trusting in a **person**.

"Justification is through faith, not on account of faith."

- B. B. Warfield

"It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ... It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith. The saving power resides exclusively, not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or in the nature of faith, but in the object of faith."

- B. B. Warfield

God’s grace and Jesus’ work are the basis for my salvation. My faith isn’t *doing* anything.

Let’s describe it (from this passage and from other texts) and then I want to illustrate it from Luke

Personal trust *in Christ* (a person) to save you. John 6:36–39 (ESV) ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

John 7:37 (ESV) ³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV) ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Hebrews 7:25 (ESV) ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

- The faith that we're talking about here cannot exist without repentance

How does repentance fit in to this? Do I need to turn from my sin? Repentance is “a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”

Acts 20:21 (ESV) ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 6:1 (ESV) ¹ Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Luke 24:46–47 (ESV) ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 2:37–38 (ESV) ³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,

Acts 17:30 (ESV) ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

- When we say faith alone, we don't mean that no one had to work for it. We're saying that we didn't have to work for it. The idea of faith *alone* described in Scripture:

Why salvation is through faith:

Romans 4:14–17 (ESV) ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ **That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.** ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Romans 11:3–8 (ESV) ³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” ⁴ But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ **But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

Galatians 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:22 (ESV)

²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:24 (ESV)

²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:26 (ESV)

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Romans 3:22–28 (ESV)

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Romans 4:1–5 (ESV) ¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

- How the transaction works...i.e., what's happening as we place our faith in Christ:
double imputation

{MOVE?} Philippians 3:9 (ESV) ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

Corinthians and 1 Peter 3

- Faith alone illustrated in Luke 18:9-14 (tax collector vs. Pharisee...notice two things: (1) told to those who *trusted in themselves* and (2) went home *justified*.

Luke 18:9–14 (ESV)

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Application: Have you turned to God?

Quote Dave Beakley: have you truly trusted in Christ? Have you come to Him? Sola Fide is not about some minimalistic approach to faith; it’s about the complete sufficiency of Christ and our need to come to Him by faith to be transformed and receive justification on the basis of His finished work.

{Return to} CENTRAL IDEA: **You are justified—forgiven of your sins and declared to be righteous by God—when you place your faith only in Jesus Christ for eternal life.**

1. What was Martin Luther struggling with when he came to Romans 1? Why did Romans 1:17 bother him so much?
2. If people in Martin Luther’s day (early 16th century) struggled to understand that their works could not justify them by God, in what ways do we misunderstand the great biblical truth of *sola fide*? Why are we tempted to believe “faith alone” means no work whatsoever—even on Christ’s part—is necessary? What is the practical danger to the church of not understanding *sola fide*?
3. What did Christ do to save us? When we say we are saved on the basis of his “work,” what do we mean?
4. How can we receive God’s gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ? What are some wrong understandings of “believing” in Jesus? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?