

ECHOES OF THE REFORMATION: Five Truths that Shape the Christian Life

Session 4: FAITH ALONE

“Justification by faith alone is the hinge upon which the whole of Christianity turns.” - Charles Simeon

“Every week I preach justification by faith alone to my people, because every week they forget it.” - Martin Luther

“That God accepts sinners on the basis of faith alone is undoubtedly the most unacceptable truth ever laid before religious man. Pride demands we earn acceptance...God requires perfection and that perfection only exists in Christ. By faith in Him we receive this merit.” - Robert Mounce

“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” - Rom. 3:28

“And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” - 1 Cor. 2:3-5

Biblical faith rests in the power of God, not our own power!

SOLA FIDE VIDEO NOTES

- *Faith is only the instrument by which we can receive all of Christ's benefits.*
- *Faith is a knowledge, an assent, and a trust.*
- *Faith in Christ equals justification, which yields good works.*
- *Christian discipleship is the fight of faith. We never have to leave faith behind.*
- *We have the very great temptation to trust in our works because we can see them and we can feel good about ourselves when we do them.*
- *At the heart of the Reformation was a desire to have confidence, assurance: Can I really know that God is for me?*
- *Justification by faith alone pointed to the Christian's assurance that we are saved.*

WHAT IS FAITH?

Saving faith enables us to live by faith. As we live by faith, there is also the spiritual gift of faith we see Paul mention in **1 Cor. 12:7-9**: *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the*

*common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, **to another faith by the same Spirit,**...*

The spiritual gift of faith should not be confused with saving faith.

“Not every Christian has the gift of faith, but every believer has some degree of faith, and we would expect it to be growing in the life of an ordinary Christian.” - Wayne Grudem

All Christians are expected to live by faith, but it seems God grants some believers the spiritual gift of faith to accomplish His purposes.

Saving faith leads to living by faith, and as we live by faith some people are given extra measures of faith to accomplish God’s will.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE DESCRIBE FAITH?

*“No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.** That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. - **Romans 4:20-25***

*Now faith is **the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.** - **Heb. 11:1***

FAITH ACROSTIC:

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“Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God’s grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God’s grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures.” - Martin Luther

DEFINING SAVING FAITH

Saving faith comes only through the _____.

Romans 1:16-17: *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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

Saving faith is a combination of _____, _____, and

Saving faith embraces, leans on, and trusts in all that God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

SAVING FAITH LEADS TO WALKING BY FAITH

Col. 1:21-23: *“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”*

Col. 2:6-7: *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

Walking by faith is _____ that we have been justified by faith.

FAITH IS AN ACT, NOT A WORK

“If you say that it is our belief and faith that saves us, then you have turned believing into a work and a man is entitled to glory and to boast in that.” - Martin Lloyd-Jones

If salvation is a gift from God, this means both faith and grace are gifts as well.

Faith is an act but it is not a work of merit. We don't want to deny that faith is an act of believing on the sinner's part. However, faith is ultimately a divine work, not a human work. Scripture teaches that both repentance and faith come to us as gifts of God (see Phil. 1:29, Acts 11:18).

Romans 4:5: *“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,…”*

We are not justified _____ on faith; rather, we are accounted righteous faith.

Faith alone is the _____ that we exercise to lay hold of Christ, the ground upon which God's verdict of righteousness is pronounced.

GENUINE FAITH WORKS

James 2:14-20,26: *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith*

apart from works is useless?...For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Paul, in his writing, was concerned with the basis for justification. James, in his writing, was concerned with the practical expression of genuine faith.

James is saying that true faith manifests itself through our actions.

ABRAHAM: FATHER OF THE FAITH

Romans 4:2-4: *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

Rom. 4:9b: *...For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.*

Rom. 4:14-16: *For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. 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,...*

Abraham was saved through faith...through trust in the promises of God. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Abraham's faith was active...

Heb. 11:8-10: *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

Heb. 11: 17-19: *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

Abraham was saved by faith alone, but his righteous acts proved his genuine faith.

"The God we are to trust in is not only the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; he is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." - John Stott

As Abraham believed God and was counted righteous, you also will you stand before God in righteousness if you have faith in Jesus.

Saving faith is a gift, but as we walk in faith our faith can grow. As we pray in faith and see God answer, our faith increases. The disciples pleaded with Jesus in Luke 17:5, “Lord, Increase our faith!”

“Faith that is exercised is faith that grows and pleases God.” - Paul Thompson

“If you are going to live by faith, then expect your faith to be tested. A faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted.” - Warren Weirsbe

FAITH VS. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Gal. 2:15-21... *We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 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. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

How does a person nullify the grace of God?

Self-righteousness is a gospel enemy because it disregards, devalues, and discredits the gospel provision of the righteousness of Christ—the sinless life he lived for us and the sin-bearing death he died for us.

There are two types of self-righteous people...

The first type is the self-disciplined moralistic believer who partially embraces the gospel, but feels deserving of God’s blessings on the basis of his or her religious performance.

We nullify God’s grace when we believe God needs our help in salvation.

The second type of self-righteous person is the one who partially embraces the gospel, but then constantly lives under a sense of guilt. This person has an acute awareness of his sin, which is good, but the expectations he sets for himself is always under-fulfilled. He lives in a state of despair because of his own shortcomings, and because this person is displeased with himself he assumes God is also displeased with him.

We nullify God’s grace when we live like our sin is greater than the power of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

INFUSION VS. IMPUTATION

Roman Catholics teach the infusion of grace. According to their belief, once grace is infused through baptism a person has to work to maintain that grace.

Protestants believe in imputation, the idea that Christ's righteousness has been counted or credited to believers as a one time permanent act.

Heb. 9:24-26: *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

The perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by grace through faith alone in Christ alone.

The Reformers taught that in Christ we are "justified and at the same time sinners." We're saved, but we're not perfect.

"Faith doesn't transport us to paradise immediately because we still struggle with sin...Nevertheless, we also enjoy assurance because our righteousness isn't our own." - Thomas Schreiner

Romans 5:1-5: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

"In the end, God isn't going to say 'Well done good and successful servant,' but 'Well done good and faithful servant.'" - Greg Laurie