

Reformation 500 years

Sola Fides [Romans 1:16-17]

Almost 500 years ago- October 31, 1517, Martin Luther penned 95 theses against a castle door which was the catalyst for a movement inside the church to get back to the basics of faith.

Luther, after a long battle with his heart and mind was disenfranchised with the church of his day. It was this wrestling, a monk who by his own testimony “hated God” to find power in the truth of the gospel in Romans 1:17.

Particularly the monk was outraged at the sale of indulgences:

John Tetzel was in charge of the sale of indulgences in Germany and was an unscrupulous man. He penned popular sayings such as:

Cleaner than when coming out of baptism and “cleaner than Adam before the fall.”
“the cross of the seller of indulgences has as much power as the cross of Christ.”
“as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”

What followed was a major shift and reformation in the church and among God’s people. A call to get back to the tenants of faith and salvation. The driving themes of this reformation are summed in what we call the five solas: Faith alone, Word alone, Grace alone, Christ alone, and Glory of God alone.

For Martin Luther, the idea that faith in Christ was all he needed transformed his life and the path of this future.

Why is it important?

Relying on law (grace/Jesus +) leaves you empty, tired, and chained.

Are you ready to trust fully in Christ and live freely by faith today?

Read Romans 1:16-17

The Power of Faith Alone (Romans 1:16)

Paul- the great murderer and enemy of the church, now declares with great delight that he is proud of the gospel and good news of Jesus.

What is there to be ashamed of? First, the authority of **Rome** and the heavy handed dominion of the emperors still control the times. Second, in declaring that he is now a Christ follower Paul has submitted his life to **a lowly carpenter**, who was born in an animal barn, fled to Egypt as a wanted criminal to hide, and was a tremendous Rabbi that was not raised in the religious center of the day (Jerusalem) but in the rural Galilee region. This same carpenter claimed to be without sin yet was convicted and died upon a cross. He did not overthrow the government like some had hoped and Paul himself was jailed for the gospel. Everything in the world was saying Jesus followers are weak and without power. Everything externally said: “be ashamed of your religious convictions.” **Can you relate?**

Here is Paul’s conviction: I am not ashamed of **Jesus because he is not ashamed of me or you!** Jesus should be shame of us but he is not!!! Rather, he pursues us even to death on the cross. He takes your shame and gives you power and dignity and clothes you with robes of righteousness. **There is power in faith alone!**

This power is not abstract and something that we merely hope for in the further. No, this power is the **power of God** for our salvation to everyone who believes.

God’s utmost desire for your life is that you may find and experience salvation. 2Pet. 3:8 Dear friends, don’t let this one thing escape you: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

To say that the gospel through faith is power acknowledges the dynamic quality of the message of Jesus Christ. In the proclamation of the good news, God is actively at work in reaching out to the hearts of the people. As you hear the message of the Savior right now, God is dynamically drawing you through the Holy Spirit by convicting you of your sin and giving you the faith to respond. **DL Moody** “the gospel is like a lion, all the preacher has to do is to open the door of the cage and get out of the way.”

The power of this gospel is to EVERYONE who believes! The message is for everyone but salvation is for those who **believe**. The gospel power is based on faith and it leads to an every increasing faith (faith to faith).

There is **power in Faith alone!**

The Purpose of Faith Alone (Romans 1:16)

If the power is God and God alones, then the purpose of faith is salvation to those who believe.

Conversion = our willing **response** to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.” (Grudem, 709). **This moment of turning from sin and turning to Christ is called faith.**

Repentance and faith/trust are two sides of the same spiritual coin.

True saving **faith includes knowledge, approval, and personal trust**

It is necessary that we have some knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done (709), but people can know facts and rebel against them or dislike them. **Romans 10:17** **So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.**

Knowledge of facts and approving of them or agreeing that they are true is not enough. Nicodemus knew the facts of Jesus and drew the correct conclusion. Yet, this approval did not lead to an immediate saving faith in Christ.

Because saving faith in Scripture involves personal trust, the word trust is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word “faith” or “belief.”

We can believe something to be true without personal commitment and trust. Example: the capital of VT (Montpelier) or $7 \times 7 = 49$.

I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me personally. In doing this I move from an interested observer of the facts of salvation and the teachings of the Bible to being someone who **enters** into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person (Grudem, 710).

Any faith in Him, however small, is better than any belief about Him, however great. –George Maddonald

Biblical faith says this: believe in Him, trust in Him.

Whoever believes in him not “believes him.” An indication faith is not intellectual assent includes a “moral element of personal trust.” ***Do you believe him or believe in him today?***

Jesus speaks of “coming to him” in several places. (John 6:37, 7:37, Matthew 11:28-30, Heb. 7:25).

Faith should increase as our knowledge increases. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). The more we hear Christ = the more faith.

The purpose of faith give to you is that you will not believe—but believe IN him. The purpose of faith is personal trust in Jesus Christ. The purpose of faith is the salvation of your soul!

The Product of Faith Alone (Romans 1:17)

How does this faith produce in use salvation?

Faith in Jesus Christ brings you His Righteousness

Back to the Beginning

In the 1500s a fastidious monk, who by his own testimony "hated God," was studying Paul's epistle to the Romans. He couldn't get past the first half of [Romans 1:17](#): "[In the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (KJV). –John Macarthur

Similarly, when a jury foreman reads the verdict, the defendant is no longer "*the accused*." Legally and officially he instantly becomes either guilty or innocent — depending on the verdict. Nothing in his actual nature changes, but if he is found not guilty he will walk out of court a free person in the eyes of the law, fully justified. –John Macarthur

This is the glorious power of Faith in Christ alone: He imputes or gives you righteousness. It is as Christ takes your sinful rags (clothes) and puts them on himself when he went to the cross. But Jesus did not leave you naked and ashamed. Instead he put his robes of righteousness upon you.

Because of Faith alone, God now sees you clothed in complete righteousness. [Is. 61:10](#) I greatly rejoice in the LORD, I exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, as a groom wears a turban and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Rejoice: You are made wholly righteousness by Faith in Jesus Christ!

Freedom

Through faith alone, the righteousness of Christ leads us and frees us to live by faith and by freedom.

Living free is like the duck hunter who was hunting with his friend in a wide-open barren of land in southeastern Georgia. Far away on the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke. Soon, he could hear the sound of crackling. A wind came up and he realized the terrible truth: a brush-fire was advancing his way. It was moving so fast that he and his friend could not outrun it. The hunter began to rifle through his pockets. Then he emptied all the contents of his knapsack. He soon found what he was looking for—a book of matches. To his friend's amazement, he pulled out a match and struck it. He lit a small fire around the two of them. Soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the brush fire to come.

They did not have to wait long. They covered their mouths with their handkerchiefs and braced themselves. The fire came near-and swept over them. But they were completely unhurt. They weren't even touched. Fire would not burn the place where fire had already burned.

The law, living by works, is like the brush-fire. I cannot escape it. But if I stand in the burned-over place, where law has already burned its way through, then I will not get hurt. Not a hair of my head will be singed.

The death of Christ is the burned-over place. There I huddle, hardly believing yet relieved. Christ's death has disarmed the law. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How freeing would it be for you today to know that you are made completely righteous in Christ. Yes you have sinned, yes you have failed to keep the law and demands of God, but to know you have complete forgiveness, righteousness when you repent (turn from) and have faith (turn to) Christ. This glorious truth radically shapes the way we live and react.

What is the product of faith alone? Salvation-righteousness- and freedom

My Response to the Gospel

Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the graces are to be hung. Break that, and you have broken the string -- the pearls lie scattered on the ground. –Spurgeon

Are you living by faith and true belief in Jesus Christ?

Conversion requires repentance (full turning from self) and trust (turning to Jesus Christ).

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to **everyone** who **believes**, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.

Are you living a proud Gospel life?

Power in the gospel

Knowing you are made fully righteous in Jesus Christ?

Free from the law of works yet free to work for the Lord



Notes

Luther

On October 31, 1517, 95 theses written in Latin and not for the common man. Intended to spur academic discussion not public consumption.

On studying Luther's life and work, one thing is clear: the much-needed Reformation took place, not because Luther decided that it would be so, but rather because the time was ripe for it, and because the Reformer and many others with him were ready to fulfill their historical responsibility (Gonzales, 15).

That feeling of terror then became increasingly frequent, for he felt unworthy of God's love, and he was not convinced that he was doing enough to be saved (Gonzales, 16).

Luther had an overpowering sense of his own sinfulness, and the more he sought to overcome it the more he became away of sin's sway over him (Gonzales, 16).

In Roman 1:17, the good news and the justice of God are indissolubly linked

Luther first composed 97 theses that fell on deaf ears in the academic world at the University of Wittenberg. Then the unexpected happened. Luther penned another set of 95 Theses with no expectation that they would have more impact than the previous ones. The second set of treatises attacked the common sale of indulgences and its theological presuppositions (Gonzales, 20).

John Tetzel was in charge of the sale of indulgences in Germany and was an unscrupulous man. He penned popular sayings such as:

Cleaner than when coming out of baptism and "cleaner than Adam before the fall."

"the cross of the seller of indulgences has as much power as the cross of Christ."

"as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Indulgences did not buy salvation; rather, they quickened your time in purgatory.

Back to the Beginning

In the 1500s a fastidious monk, who by his own testimony "hated God," was studying Paul's epistle to the Romans. He couldn't get past the first half of [Romans 1:17](#): "[In the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (KJV). —John MacArthur

Similarly, when a jury foreman reads the verdict, the defendant is no longer "the accused." Legally and officially he instantly becomes either guilty or innocent — depending on the verdict. Nothing in his actual nature changes, but if he is found not guilty he will walk out of court a free person in the eyes of the law, fully justified. —John MacArthur

Conversion and Faith

Conversion = our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.” (Grudem, 709).

The turning from sin is called repentance and the turning to Christ is called faith.

True saving faith includes knowledge, approval, and personal trust

It is necessary that we have some knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done (709), but people can know facts and rebel against them or dislike them

Knowledge and approval are not enough. Knowledge of facts and approving of them or agreeing that they are true is not enough. Nicodemus knew the facts of Jesus and drew the correct conclusion. Yet, this approval did not lead to an immediate saving faith in Christ.

I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me personally. In doing this I move from an interested observer of the facts of salvation and the teachings of the Bible to being someone who enters into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person (Grudem, 710).

Faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me!

Because saving faith in Scripture involves personal trust, the word trust is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word “faith” or “belief.”

We can believe something to be true without personal commitment. Example: the capital of VT or $7 \times 7 = 49$.

The word faith one the other hand is sometimes used today to refer to an almost irrational commitment to something in spite of evidence to the contrary.

Biblical faith

Whoever believes in him not “believes him.” An indication faith is not intellectual assent includes a “moral element of personal trust.”

Jesus speaks of “coming to him” in several places. (John 6:37, 7:37, Matthew 11:28-30, Heb. 7:25).

Faith should increase as our knowledge increases. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). The more we hear Christ = the more faith.

Repentance

A heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ (Grudem, 713).

Repentance and Faith are two sides of the same coin (Grudem, 713).

When Jesus invites sinners he immediately adds, “take my yoke upon you and learn from Me (Matthew 11:28-29).

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.

Power. Acknowledges the dynamic quality of the message. In the proclamation of the gospel, God is actively at work in reaching out to the hearts of people (NAC).

It is not a lifeless message but a vibrant encounter for everyone who responds in faith.

I am not shamed, said another way “I am proud of the gospel.”

Faith to faith

It is based on faith – and it leads to an ever increasing faith (NAC, 73).

17 For in it God’s righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed (δικαιοσύνη γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται). Rev., more correctly, *therein is revealed a righteousness of God*. The absence of the article denotes that a peculiar kind of righteousness is meant. This statement contains the subject of the epistle: *Righteousness is by faith*. The subject is not stated formally nor independently, but as a proof that the Gospel is a power, etc.

This word δικαιοσύνη *righteousness*, and its kindred words δίκαιος *righteous*, and δικαίωω *to make righteous*, play so important a part in this epistle that it is desirable to fix their meaning as accurately as possible.

1. **In the New Testament δίκαιος is used both of God and of Christ. Of God**, 1 John 1:9; John 17:25; Revelation 16:5; Romans 3:26. Of Christ, 1 John 2:1; 3:7; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14. In these passages the word characterizes God and Christ either in their essential quality or in their action; either as righteous according to the eternal norm of divine holiness (John 17:25; 1 John 3:7; Romans 3:26), or as holiness passes into righteous dealing with men (1 John 1:9).

2. **Δίκαιος is used of men, denoting their normal relation to the will and judgment of God.** Hence it means *virtuous upright, pure in life, correct in thinking and feeling*. It stands opposed to ἀνομία *lawlessness*; ἁμαρτία *sin*; ἀκαθαρσία *impurity*, a contrast wanting in classical usage, where the conception of sin is vague. See Romans 6:13, 16, 18, 20; 8:10; 2 Corinthians 6:7, 14; Ephesians 5:9; 6:14; Philippians 1:11; James 3:18.

Where δικαιοσύνη *righteousness*, is joined with ὁσιότης *holiness* (Luke 1:75; Ephesians 4:24), it denotes right conduct toward men, as holiness denotes piety toward God. It appears in the wider sense of *answering to the demands of God in general*, Matthew 13:17; 10:41; 23:29; Acts 10:22, 35; and in the narrower sense of *perfectly answering the divine demands, guiltless*. So of Christ, Acts 3:14; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1.

3. It is found in the classical sense of it is *right*, Philippians 1:7, or *that which is right*, Colossians 4:1. This, however, is included within the Christian conception.

Δικαιοσύνη *righteousness*, is therefore that which fulfills the claims of δίκη *right*. “It is the state commanded by God and standing the test of His judgment; the character and acts of a man approved of Him, in virtue of which the man corresponds with Him and His will as His ideal and standard” (Cremer).

The medium of this righteousness is faith. Faith is said to be counted or reckoned for righteousness; i.e., righteousness is ascribed to it or recognized in it. Romans 4:3, 6, 9, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23.

In this verse the righteousness revealed in the Gospel is described as a righteousness *of God*. This does not mean righteousness *as an attribute of God*, as in ch. 3:5; but *righteousness as bestowed on man by God*. The state of the justified man is due to God. The righteousness which becomes his is that which God declares to be righteousness and ascribes to him. Righteousness thus expresses *the relation of being right into which God puts the man who believes*. See further, on *justified*, ch. 2:13.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

- Hebrews 11:1 does not necessarily define faith as give us some of its characteristics
 -
- “Substance”
 - the word hypostasis, translated by the NIV as a participle is in fact a noun, which has used variously to communicate the idea of substance, firmness, confidence, a collection of documents establishing ownership or proof.
 - Could translate “Now Faith is the resolute confidence”
 - Shows that Faith gives the “basis” for our calculations and our triumphal life in Jesus Christ.
- “Evidence”
 - word elenchus is not a static emotion but something lively and active, not just a state of immovable dogmatism but a vital certainty which impels the believer to stretch out his hand.
- “Hoped”
 - hope as used often in the NT refers not to something we would like to have or see, a kind of personal wish, but rather, to something like “confident expression” (EBS)

Heb. 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

Heb. 11:38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.*

- Faith does not guarantee comfort. Although the world was not worthy the world also rejected their testimony.
- The faithful were outlawed as unfit for society. The reality is that society was unfit for them (NICNT)

Heb. 11:39 ¶ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

- Did not receive... they lived and died in prospect of a fulfillment which none of them experienced on earthly yet so real was that fulfillment to them that it gave them power to press upstream (NICNT)
 - [Salmon](#)→

Heb. 11:40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

- All of the major figures summarized had major character flaws.
 - Barak was scared
 - Samson was foolish
 - Jephthah was rash
 - David was driven by lust
- Hebrews makes the point that the promise-making God is faithful to his oaths and that people of faith live in light of God’s promises.
- The life of faith is the only life that pleases God (NIV)
- Pitfalls: (NIV)

before they are ready to spawn. Salmon deaths that occur on the upriver journey are referred to as *en route mortality*

Application

DL Moody “the gospel is like a lion, all the preacher has to do is to open the door of the cage and get out of the way.”

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“Christian faith does not mean leaving the intellect behind. Our author has no place for a naive acceptance of whatever feels good or seems inspiring at the time.” -- Loader

“[To have Faith in Christ] means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.” CS Lewis

Big Questions

What is my message about?

Faith Alone

Why is it important?

Relying on law (grace/Jesus +) leaves you empty, tired, and chained.

What do I want them to do?

Trust fully and live freely

What is the single most persuasive idea?