

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted the 95 theses, his *Disputation On the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany. This set into motion the Protestant Reformation. In 1521, at the Diet of Worms, called by Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, Luther was asked to recant. He responded, "I cannot and will not recant anything. On this I take my stand."

Today, as we continue our life lesson series, "SOLA", we ask, "Why? Why would Martin Luther take a stand and not recant? Why would he risk being excommunicated by the Catholic church, being cut off from its' blessing and sacraments, and even being arrested and killed?" His answer was in *SOLA Scriptura*, *SOLA Fide*, *SOLA Gratia*, *SOLUS Christus*, *SOLI Deo Gloria*. Today, we look at *SOLA Fide: Faith Alone*.

Martin Luther believed, "Faith Alone is the article that determines whether the church stands or falls." And, it had everything to do with our justification/righteousness. God is perfect, holy, and just. And, although we are created in the image of God, because of our sin, we are eternally separated from Him. This made Luther (and us) ask, "How do we get restored back into a 'righteous relationship' with God?"

Answer #1: Faith + Works -> Justification. In Luther's day, this was the Catholic Church's answer. For him, it meant sleeping in the cold, eating little to look like a skeleton, making pilgrimages to holy places, and

continually confessing his sins to make penance for them. Yet, he still felt he'd failed to meet God's holy mark. He was a depressed, legalistic, ascetic monk, full of torment and fear, trying to merit salvation.

But, in his Bible reading, Luther started to see righteousness differently. Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Galatians 2:16 show us. Thus, Luther discovered Answer #2: Faith -> Justification + Works. "Through faith" not "on account of" transformed him. Faith became the path to paradise, the instrument by which we receive Christ righteousness, and the foundation for ALL good works!

Life application? 1. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)." Our only "work" is to believe in Jesus. 2. "One is justified by faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28)." Jesus, Paul, and Luther held this. We should as well! 3. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10)." Faith isn't about works, but faith works!

Let's pray. Lord, 1 Peter 2:24 (ESV) says, "He himself (Jesus) bore our sins in his body on the tree (cross), that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Lord, today, as we live out our lives *simul iustus et peccator*, at the same time just (saint) and sinner, help us die to our sin and live to righteousness. Lord, work Your grace, mercy, and peace into us, your workmanship, and help us live out good works for others!