

October 22, 2017

***Sola Fide*—Faith Alone**

Romans 4:1-16

Intro

- What is the greatest problem we are facing today?
 - “The Immanent Frame” (*A Secular Age* by Charles Taylor)
- The question of how you can be made right with God could not be more relevant. ...This was *the* question of Luther’s life.

“I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what he meant. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”’ There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. ...Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light.” –**Martin Luther**, *Preface to Luther’s Latin Writings*

 *The Five Solas in Romans 4*

***Sola Fide* in Romans 4**

- “The one who works” vs. “The one who does not work” (v. 4-5)
 - *Wages or a Gift?*

- Faith always comes empty handed; it brings nothing to bargain with.

- God justifies *the ungodly*. (v. 5)
 - “Medical” vs. “Legal” Grace

- Justification not about what you do—or even about what God enables you to do. It’s about what Someone else did that freely becomes yours.
 - “*Simul iustus et peccator*”—“At the same time just and sinner”

- God’s grace does empower us to obey. But our little, grace-produced steps of obedience do not in any way *contribute* to why we have God’s favor.
 - “More happy, but not more secure”
(*A Debtor to Mercy* by Augustus Toplady)

The Council of Trent
Session VI, 1547
Concerning Justification

“Justification itself is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just.” (ch. 7)

Imputed Righteousness (God’s Work *for* Us) vs. Imparted Righteousness (God’s Work *in* Us)

- Who is this “blessed person” who will never have his sins held against him? (v. 8)

- Paul's point: circumcision did not have anything to do with *why* Abraham was declared to be righteous. (v. 10)

The Council of Trent

"If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification... let him be anathema." (Canon 9)

"Faith Alone" is Not a "Lonely Faith"

- There will be no one showing up in heaven with *just faith*.

"...the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." -*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, XI.2

➤ *The eye alone sees, but not an eye that is alone!*

- Abraham's faith was a personal trust that led to a lifetime of loyalty to God. (v. 20-22)

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'—and he was called a friend of God." (James 2:21-23)

“What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn’t ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always *active*. Whoever doesn’t do such works is without faith. It is impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire.” –**Martin Luther**, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*

Faith + Works = Justification
or
Faith = Justification + Works

Living in the Paradise of *Sola Fide*

- Living in the good of *sola fide* means that we are rescued from performance.

“It is God Who Justifies!”

➤ *The Chariots of Fire*

- So many issues that surface in people’s lives are *insecurity* masking itself.

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” (**Romans 8:33**)

From “Do Penance” to “Repent”

From Monasticism to Ministry

“We are freed from the burden of self-justification to serve one another in love. In the medieval system you sought justification by retreating from the world into a monastery to spend your time in confession and religious discipline. Justification by faith meant you were free to go out into the world and spend your time serving others without always looking over your shoulder to wonder what God was thinking of you.”
–**Michael Reeves & Tim Chester**, *Why the Reformation Still Matters*, 33

“Self-awareness is the enemy of ministry.”