
Sermon Text Discussion 10/22/17

Reformation 500: Recovering Gospel Doctrine for Gospel Culture
Faith Alone (Romans 4:1-8)
By Drew Hunter

Overview

At the time of the Reformation, a life-transforming movement was unleashed and it continues today. It happened through recovering the central message of the Bible, which is good news for bad people. This sermon focuses on one of the five main tenants of the Reformation: sola fide or faith alone. That is, we receive our acceptance by God through faith alone. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is clearly displayed in Romans 4 and it answers a few key questions about this doctrine:

1. What is justification?
2. How do we get it?
3. Who is it for?
4. What does it do to us? In other words, what happens to our lives if we get this doctrine right in our heads and pressed into our hearts?

Quotations

So, I encourage you to consider this: Deep down, we're all like Martin Luther. We all know that God made us, that he is good, and that we are not. We've not only failed to live up to God's standards, but we've failed to live up to our own standards. And the reason why this is so relevant is because we are made as eternal beings. Our lives matter. What we think and do matters. It matters to God. And he holds us accountable for it. He says that a day is coming when we'll stand before him. Romans 3:19 says that every mouth is closed, and the whole world is accountable to God. And in this cosmic courtroom, we all deserve to be declared guilty, and sentenced to eternal wrath. So, the question of how to be found righteous in God's sight is the most important question of our lives. — Drew Hunter

Luther in his Galatians lectures: "When the devil tell us we are sinners and therefore damned, we may answer, 'Because you say I am a sinner, I will be righteous and saved.' Then the devil will say, 'No, you will be damned.' And I will reply, 'NO, for I fly to Christ who has given himself for my sins. Therefore, Satan, you will not prevail against me when you try to terrify me by telling me how great my sins are and try to reduce me to heaviness, distrust, despair, hatred, contempt, and blasphemy. On the contrary, when you say that I am a sinner, you give me armor and weapons against yourself... for Christ died for sinners. And whenever you object that I am a sinner, you remind me of the benefit of Christ my Redeemer. It is on his shoulders, not mine, that all my sins lie... So when you say I am a sinner, you do not terrify me but comfort me immeasurably" (Gal, 1:37).

Understanding & Application

- 1) Interact with this statement: God loves us first and makes us lovely.
- 2) Why do we need to keep re-believing this gospel? In other words, why do we need to keep having the gospel pounded into our heads daily?

- 3) Explain what is meant by the statement that justification is a declaration about us, not a transformation within us. Why was this such a key insight in light of the Roman Catholic view of justification at the time of the reformation?
- 4) At the heart of the gospel is a sharp contrast between faith and works. Noting verses 4-5, explain what is fundamental about believing and what is fundamental about working.
- 5) Romans 4 says we are ungodly, we are sinners, we have lawless deeds. But, at the same time believers are declared to be righteous. Luther's phrase to describe this was simultaneously righteous and a sinner. How can this be? Luther used an image of a great and righteous and worthy king who chose to love and marry a prostitute full of shame to convey this idea. In your own words retell this story and message.
- 6) Throughout all of Romans, Paul has in mind a certain kind of faith, more than just what today might be viewed as agreement with the facts. Explain the difference between a living faith and dead faith.
- 7) Drew mentioned that the doctrine of justification is omnirelevant, that is that it is relevant to every aspect of our lives. Drew mentioned 8 implications, but there are more. Recall and explain some of the implications that Drew shared or come up with your own.