

I. PROTESTANT REFORMATION

- A. The Protestant Reformation was a 16th-century movement that sought to reform the Western church by returning to the authority of Scripture and the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It permanently reshaped Christianity and led to the rise of Protestant churches.
- B. By the early 1500s, many church leaders believed that the Catholic church had drifted from biblical teaching resulting in widespread corruption including payments to reduce punishment for sin, elevating church tradition above scripture, salvation involved human effort in addition to God’s grace, and limited the common people’s access to the bible.
- C. The spark of the Reformation came on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in Wittenberg Castle Church, challenging the unbiblical teaching of the Catholic church and calling for a theological debate.

II. THE FIVE SOLA BELIEFS OF THE REFORMATION

- A. The Latin word *sola* means “alone” or “only”. There are five “sola” essential belief statements that helped shape the Protestant Reformation and have become essential beliefs of Christians today. They include:
 - 1. Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone is the final authority for faith and practice.
 - 2. Sola Fide – We are justified by faith alone.
 - 3. Sola Gratia – Salvation is by grace alone.
 - 4. Solus Christus – Christ alone is the mediator and Savior.
 - 5. Soli Deo Gloria – All glory belongs to God alone.
- B. The early reformers believed that these five statements were absolutely essential to the faith and deviation from one will lead to error in another resulting in believing in a false gospel.

III. SOLA FIDE WAS A RETURN TO THE TRUE GOSPEL

- A. The doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone became the defining truth of the Protestant Reformation, calling the church back to the biblical gospel
- B. How important is *sola fide*? It is so important to the Gospel message and a biblical understanding of salvation that Martin Luther described it as being “the article with and by which the church stands.” Those who reject *sola fide* reject the only Gospel that can save them and by necessity embrace a false gospel.

IV. HOW IS SOMEONE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD?

- A. Paul was addressing the very question at the heart of *sola fide*: On what basis does God declare a sinner righteous? Is justification received through faith alone in Jesus Christ, or through faith combined with human works?
- B. Paul's answer is unmistakable. Throughout Romans and Galatians, he teaches that sinners are justified by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law.
 - 1. ***5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,-Rom 4:5***
 - 2. ***8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.-Rom 5:8***
 - 3. ***16 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.-Galatians 2:16***
 - a) The teaching of salvation through faith alone is not an isolated teaching, but the consistent testimony of all of Scripture: salvation is entirely by God's grace, received through faith alone in Christ alone, on the basis of His finished work rather than any human merit or obedience.

V. SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH RUNS THROUGH ALL OF SCRIPTURE

- A. The first explicit demonstration of God's grace in the Bible is generally understood to be in Genesis 3, immediately after Adam and Eve sinned. Although the word "grace" is not used until later (to Noah in Genesis 6:8) God's gracious character is displayed immediately after the first sin entered the world.
1. God seeking out Adam and Eve after they sinned is a glorious picture of God seeking out us and guilty sinners first.
 - a) ***"But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'"-Gen 3:9***
 - b) ***"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"-Rom 5:8***
 2. Adam and Eve attempted to cover their shame with fig leaves, but God replaced their inadequate covering with garments of skin, provided through the shedding of an animal's blood. *This gracious act foreshadowed the necessity of a substitutionary sacrifice and ultimately pointed to Jesus Christ,* whose blood would fully cover the sin and shame of all who believe.
 - a) ***"And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."-Gen 3:21***

VI. ABRAHAM 'S JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

- A. One of the most significant verses in the entire Bible that establishes the biblical doctrine of justification by faith was when Abraham believed God before the law was even given.
1. ***"And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness."-Gen 15:6***
 2. ***"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"-Rom 4:3***

VII. MAN'S FAITH WORKING THROUGH GOD'S GRACE

- A. Grace is God's unmerited favor toward guilty sinners, demonstrated supremely in Jesus Christ, by which He forgives, justifies, adopts, transforms, and empowers all who trust in Him.
- B. Humanity is saved by placing faith in the greatest demonstration of God's grace: that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Salvation is received not by human merit or works, but by trusting in Christ's finished work on the cross and His victorious resurrection.

VIII. THE EXODUS -A PICTURE OF THE GOSPEL

- A. The Exodus is one of the clearest Old Testament pictures of salvation by grace alone through faith. God redeemed Israel not because they earned His favor, but because of His covenant love and mercy. He delivered them before giving them the Law, teaching us that salvation is authored and comes from God alone.
- B. The New Testament then presents Christ's work as the greater Exodus, delivering His people from slavery, not merely from an evil oppressor like Pharaoh, but from sin, death, and Satan.
- C. After delivering Israel from slavery, God introduces Himself in the wilderness to an entire nation as the God who is gracious, kind, and merciful.
 - 1. ***⁵ Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty-Exodus 34:5-7***
- D. This is especially powerful because God revealed this after Israel sinned with the golden calf. In other words, God revealed Himself as gracious in the context of Israel's failure.

IX. WHY SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IS ESSENTIAL

1. IT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE OF GOD

- a) Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone reveals the very heart and character of God. It displays who He is, what He values, and how He accomplishes redemption. Rather than revealing man's goodness or ability, the gospel reveals God's holiness, love, mercy, justice, wisdom, and glory.

(1) God's highest aim in redemption is the display of His own glory. Salvation by grace through faith ensures that all praise belongs to Him, leaving no room for human boasting-Johnathon Edwards

2. IT HELPS DEFINE THE TRUE GOSPEL

- a) The gospel is not primarily about what we do for God, but what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.
- b) *The true gospel magnifies both the depth of man's sinful and fallen condition and the greatness of God's grace in responding to it.* It places the emphasis on the glory of God and His saving work in Christ, not on man's ability, merit, or effort. Salvation is entirely the work of God from beginning to end, so that all praise, honor, and glory belong to Him alone.

3. IT POINTS TO THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S DEATH

- a) Salvation by faith alone magnifies the sufficiency of Christ's finished work on the cross. Through His sacrificial death, Jesus fully satisfied God's righteous wrath against sin, making it possible for guilty sinners to be declared righteous before God solely through faith in Him, apart from any works of their own.

4. IT EXCLUDES ALL HUMAN BOASTING

- a) Salvation by faith alone eliminates human boasting because it teaches that our acceptance before God rests entirely on Christ's righteousness, not our own performance. Since

salvation is a gift of God's grace received through faith, no one can claim any credit for being justified.

b) **⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.-Eph 2:8**

5. IT GIVES US ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION

- a) Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone produces assurance because it grounds the believer's confidence not in the strength of their faith or the consistency of their obedience, but in the finished work of Christ and the unchanging promises of God.
- b) If our justification depended on our performance, assurance would always fluctuate, but because it depends on Christ's righteousness, believers can rest securely in Him.

6. IT MAKE CHRISTIANITY UNIQUE FROM ALL OTHER RELIGIONS

- a) **Every other religion says, "Do." Christianity says, "Done."** Christianity is unique because it is the story of God reaching down to save sinners, not sinners striving to reach God. Salvation is God's gracious work, received by faith in Christ rather than earned through human effort or religious works.