

SOLA FIDA

BY FAITH ALONE

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone is important because:

1. We wrongly measure ourselves up by how well we are able to go at it alone
2. It addresses two of humankind's ultimate needs:
 - The need to be in right standing before God
 - The need for justice
3. It corrects our misconceptions around the ideas of:
 - Salvation
 - Faith in Christ alone

TEXT: ROMANS 3:21 - 23

SERMON POINTS

1. GOD'S JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS ORIGINATES IN HIS GRACE

- Read Romans 3:24-26

In the lead up to this text, Paul painted the picture of the true state of humanity: we are all sinners and that no person, regardless of who they are, will be spared from God's judgement. Then, in this passage Paul goes on to show how God made provision for humanity, through the cross of Christ to justify, redeem and reconcile us back to himself, so that we no longer need to fear his judgement. He also teaches us how to receive this gift of grace, and that is through faith alone.

Paul explains that God initiated the process on how to make us righteous. Because he loved us, and knew there was absolutely no way that we could make ourselves righteous, he had to do it FOR us. He also knew that even if we tried to make ourselves holy, we couldn't, because sin was in our very nature, and unless he removed it from us, we would remain in sin for all eternity. But in his grace, God willed and acted on our behalf to justify us, so that we could rightly stand before him as NOT GUILTY.

Q. Sin is not just what we do but who we are. Why is this important to understand?

Q. What does it mean to be justified?

Q. Why is it impossible for any human being to justify themselves in relation to sin and judgment?

Q. What does it mean that God justified us because of his GRACE?

2. GOD'S JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS IS BASED ON THE CROSS OF CHRIST

- Read Romans 3:24-26

Because of God's love for us, he was willing to do the work that needed to be done in order to justify us. But because he is also a righteous judge, he had to have a plan that was fully in line with his just character. Without God acting justly, he would no longer be trustworthy, and that would make him terrifying.

The only way for God to extend justice and mercy at the same time would be for he himself to pay the price for our sin. His death would pay the price for our death, and in so doing, God would justly justify the unjust.

On the cross God did this through REDEMPTION, PROPITIATION and DEMONSTRATION:

- REDEMPTION – as slaves to sin, without being able to free ourselves, God paid the price for us (with his blood) to free us once and for all.
- PROPITIATION – when injustice occurs, we all demand for justice to be served – because that is right. Our sin (not just what we do, but our inherently rebellious nature) is an affront to God's holy nature, and needs to be dealt with, in judgment, otherwise God would cease to be just. His anger towards our sin is entirely appropriate and we deserve his punishment for it. But because of God's love for us, he placed the punishment we deserved on Christ, in order that we might be justified. It was not just a free pass or pardon, nor was Christ just our substitute. Someone had to pay, and so Christ suffered the full weight of God's judgement for our guilt, in our place. As a result, we no longer carry the guilt of sin on our own shoulders. Sin has been paid for once and for all, and we are justly declared NOT GUILTY.
- DEMONSTRATION – the cross simultaneously demonstrates how God was able to deal with guilt AND declare sinners righteous in Christ. It was only at this point in history that sin was fully dealt with, once and for all.

Q. Why is God's punishment of sin an act of justice?

Q. Why would it be foolish for anyone to believe that without justice, God would still be loving?

Q. Why is the picture of being a "slave" to sin, such an appropriate picture?

Q. Why did God have to pay a price for our sin?

Q. Explain in your own words why it is appropriate for God to be angry about sin, and why propitiation (atonement for sin) was necessary?

3. GOD'S JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS IS RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH ALONE

- Read Romans 3:21-26

In verses 22, 25 & 26 Paul says that this truth is applied to our lives through FAITH in Jesus Christ. This means understanding the message of the cross, why it was required, the mechanics by which it saves us, and then having full confidence that it is entirely sufficient to secure our right standing with God. There is nothing else that is required. God has done everything to ensure that we can be freely justified. We trust solely that that was and is enough.

How we live this out is important:

- We need to make sure that we do not cheapen God's grace by living sinful lives, as if sin did not cost Christ everything. No, we live lives that honour all that he has given to us, by putting sin to death.
- We constantly remind ourselves that he is the only reason why we are saved. We remain in a posture of absolute humility and dependence upon God. We reflect on God's grace to us, and marvel at his kindness that he would give us his grace so freely, and we rejoice in our salvation.
- We actively live out of his grace by repenting of sin, rejecting self-pity and self-righteousness and we get busy doing good works.

Q. What does it mean to RECEIVE God's grace by FAITH?

Q. Luther was deeply concerned that the church had got it wrong, and wanted to add a human contribution to God's gift of grace, which is why he said we are saved by faith ALONE. In what ways are we tempted to try and add to God's grace, instead of accepting it as it is?

Q. Why is it ridiculous for us to continue living in sinful life patterns, when Jesus suffered and died to pay the price for our sin?

Q. Why is self-righteousness equally as foolish (and offensive) as living in sin, considering all that Christ did to justify us?

Q. Why do you think it is important for us to remind ourselves continually of the fact that we did not do anything to earn God's grace, but that he did all the work for us?

Q. What is the one big take away that God has impressed upon you in this message, and what action steps are you going to take in response?