

The 5 Solas: Sola Fide (Faith Alone) Romans 3:21-4:5; James 2:14-26

INTRODUCTION

We begin this morning with a **question**: “Which is a **greater threat to the church—subtraction from the gospel or additions to it?**” What do I mean? Subtraction would be to take away something. **There certainly have been serious subtractions in history.** Denying Jesus’ true deity or humanity. Take away from the Incarnation and you don’t have the true gospel. Other subtractions include denying the bodily resurrection of Christ or denying the existence of God or the supernatural. Those are serious and gospel-altering subtractions.

However, one could make the argument that the greater danger is not subtraction but addition. The Apostle Paul planted a church in a region called Galatia somewhere around the year 48 AD. Only one year later he learns that the Galatian Christians were in serious jeopardy of abandoning the gospel. He wrote them **this**, *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”* (Galatians 1:6–9)

Gospel + is still rampant in our day. Fiddling with the gospel. Changing the gospel. The tragedy is when you add to it you don’t have it anymore. Here we are 2,000 plus years post-apostolic age. If one year beyond apostolic teaching in Galatia could produce such a warning, how much more should we beware 2,000 years later? Think of all the harm that can be done in 2,000 years. Think of all the **“get used to something not the gospel”** that can happen in 2,000 years. Paul doesn’t say these alternative gospels are options of personal

preference, he says anyone with an alternative gospel should be condemned to hell.

Today most people, even Christians, shrug their shoulders with whatever. Is it no wonder there is so much gospel+ even in churches that claim to be Christian churches?

- Gospel + works = salvation
- Gospel + emotional experience = salvation
- Gospel + social causes = salvation
- Gospel + tradition = salvation

These are all false gospels. Millions of people continue to attend churches where it is not Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, God’s glory alone. Paul makes it clear that there is no other gospel. There is no other salvation. There is no other way. All other gospels be damned to hell because they lead people to hell even as they think they are on the path to heaven.

How many gospel+ people will wake up in eternity to find out they were not trusting in Christ’s atoning work alone? Their trust was in Jesus but Jesus plus something. That is not the gospel that saves. There is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved including Pope, pastor, apostle, or your name.

We return to our study of **Five Solas. Sola.** What does that mean? **Sola** is Latin. It means *“alone.”* Over the years, the doctrines of the Reformation were summarized in “Solas.” Here they are in Latin with their English counterparts: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone), Solus Christus (Christ alone), Soli Deo Gloria (God’s Glory Alone). In each of these categories, the Reformers identified additions that had been made. They said, *“No, you cannot add to Scripture. You cannot add to grace. You cannot add to faith, Christ, and God’s glory. Add to these and you have fundamentally changed the gospel.”*

For this morning, we turn to **Sola Fide (Faith Alone)**. **“Faith alone”** brings us to the heart of the dispute between Protestants and Roman Catholics. So important is this doctrine that Luther called it the doctrine by which the church stands or falls. In the words of J. I. Packer, *“a church that lapses from justification by faith can scarcely be called Christian at all.*

In your Bible, please turn in your Bible to **Romans 3:21-4:5**.

First, please note...

I. Sola Fide: _____

Sola Fide is shorthand for justification by faith alone.

That is a sinner is justified by God through faith alone.

Justification answers the **question**, *“How can condemned, guilty sinners stand righteous before a holy God?”*

Sola gratia, sola fide, and solus Christus are closely related. **Grace alone** emphasizes that **salvation is a gift** thus it is the **source** of salvation or justification. **Christ alone** is the **basis** for our salvation or justification. Christ alone emphasizes that there is no other name whereby a person can be saved. **Faith alone** emphasizes the **means** of our salvation or justification

In the context of biblical theology, the word *“justify”* means *“to declare righteous.”* The term comes from the courtroom of the first century. As a trial drew to a close, the judge, having heard all the evidence, would pronounce his verdict. **To justify a person meant to declare that they were not guilty in the eyes of the law.**

There is another way to understand the term. If you have a computer, you probably know what it means to have justified margins. A **“justified”** margin is one which is absolutely straight from top to bottom. The computer arranges the words and spaces so that all the lines end up at exactly the same place. In that sense to justify means **“to make straight that which would otherwise be crooked.”**

Now take those two concepts and put them together. When you trust Jesus Christ as Savior, God declares you **“not guilty”** of sin and **“straight”** instead of **“crooked”** in His eyes. It is an act entirely of God, performed by God on the basis of Jesus’ death on the cross, and is received by us through the

instrumentality of faith. Nothing you do and nothing you ever could do contributes to your own justification. It is entirely an act of God on the sinner’s behalf. The crooked is declared to be straight and the guilty sinner is now declared righteous in God’s eyes.

Here are a couple of definitions you can take with **you**:

(1) Justification is the _____ act of God whereby He declares the sinner to be _____ on the basis of the _____ work of Christ.

(2) Appropriated by faith alone, it is the _____ legal action by which God declares the believer to be _____ from his guilt and made _____ before God’s law.

From the verses that we read, please note two important truths:

A. Justification by faith alone is for _____

(3:27-31)

B. Abraham proves that _____ was, is, and always will be by _____ alone (4:1-5)

But why is it that good works cannot save us?

Good works can't _____ your sin, but sin _____
your good works.

Good works can't save you because God doesn't _____
on a curve.

Good works can't save you because you can never be
good enough long _____.

Good works can't save you because if they could, you
wouldn't need _____ at all.

Sola Fide explained...next please note...

II. Sola Fide: _____

Here's a quote worth **considering**: *"Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone."*

(<https://gracequotes.org/author-quote/john-calvin/>) In other words, faith that justifies never stands alone. The fact that we are justified by faith alone does not take away the necessity of works.

While you and I are not in the position to make pronouncements about who is and who is not saved, the warnings found in the Bible are strong enough that it is clear there is such a thing as a faith that does not save. Jesus himself **said**, *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)*

Please turn in your Bible to **James 2:14-26**.

Two observations:

A. Sola Fide is much more than mere

_____ **ascent (2:14-17)**

James combats this notion that a person can just say they believe and have nothing that goes with it. Faith, if it is not evidenced by what it does, then it does not exist.

B. Sola Fide shows its _____

in what it does (2:18-26)

Brethren, we rejoice in God's work in justifying us. We rejoice that God sees us through the righteousness of Christ. But the genuine faith that unites us to Christ is also an active faith. It is a faith that is living and that impacts everything about us. It was true for Abraham; it was true for Rahab, and it needs to be true for you and me. My faith should influence everything.

But what about **v. 24**? We need to deal with it, don't we? Whereas James says Abraham was justified by works, Paul argues that if Abraham was justified by works, he would have something to boast about but not before God. How can we make sense of this?

Romans 4:2 speaks about our justification before God. That's Paul's point. But the point he makes is different from that of the apostle Paul. **His main concern is: how was it evident before men that Abraham was justified?** Abraham's justification was seen in his obedience to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? I realize that our study this morning was loaded with content. For some, our minds are about ready to explode with all this truth. **If you have questions, please see one of the church leaders, see Jim Rowland (teaches the Sun AM Bible study).** But our time together in God's word is not solely for the purpose of exercising our intellectual muscle. **Our study of God's word should impact our lives.**

Here's a couple of ideas to take with you:

1. **Sola Fide encourages us to give _____ for a great salvation**

2. **Sola Fide encourages us to remember that _____ of salvation comes from the Lord**

3. **Sola Fide encourages us to _____ pursue Christ in every aspect of life**