

Hebrews 11:1-6

During these 5 weeks in October we are looking at each of the 5 solas of the Protestant reformation.

1. We started with *Sola scriptura* or the belief that Scripture alone is God's inspired, inerrant, and sufficient Word, and is thus the final authority for the church.
3. Last Sunday we saw *Solus Christus* or Christ Alone. This sola affirms that Christ alone is the way which the ungodly are justified in God's sight.
3. Today we come to *Sola fide* or Faith Alone. In other words, we receive the redemption Christ has accomplished only through faith.

If we are made right through faith, we need to understand what faith is, do we not? One of the greatest texts on faith in all of the Bible is Hebrews 11. Many call it, not the hall of fame, but the hall of faith. Let's look at the first 6 verses together.

READ/PRAY

1. What is faith? v1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

This is as close to a definition of faith as we get

1. *Hope, is expectantly waiting for something that you trust you will one day get to enjoy...it could be translated as an active waiting.* My definition
2. Faith is the assurance of the things you hope for, expectantly wait for and trust you will one day get to enjoy...so much so that it has become a conviction.
3. In other words faith is being so certain of the things you hope for that you are already experiencing the joy of those things that you hope and wait for.
4. That is why faith is the assurance, the confidence, of the things hoped for.
 - a. We see how faith is depicted by the TV preachers of getting so stirred up you twist God's arm and convince him to give you what you want.
 - b. That is not faith....faith isn't about convincing God to give you what you want.
 - c. It is about being convinced yourself that what God wants and has promised is guaranteed!
5. *"Faith is to be so convinced of the future fulfillment of all the promises of God, that you live as though they are a present reality even when everything around you says you are being foolish and even irrational."* My definition

a. *It is not enough to know, and consider, and desire, and hope; but we must believe. Now, this is the nature and property of faith, to apply all these ancient and future doings and dealings of God to ourselves, as if they were now present....hope eyes chiefly the mercy and goodness of the promise, but faith eyes mainly the authority and truth of the promiser; hope looks upon its object as future, but faith only looks upon the object as present; both make a particular application to themselves, but hope in a waiting for it, and faith in a way of now enjoying it. Hence faith is called, "the substance of things hoped for." It is the substance, or confidence of things hoped for, as if we had them already in hand... herein lies the sweetness of faith: in that we believe not Christ only to be "a" Savior, and righteousness, but "my" Savior, and "my" righteousness.*" Isaac Ambrose

b. *The sweetness of Christianity lay in pronouns: when a man can say, "My Lord, and my God, and my Jesus. I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved ME and gave himself for ME."*
Luther

2. It is faith alone that saves. v2

2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

1. Don't think that the OT saints were saved by keeping the law, or by sacrificing, or by celebrating feasts, or by being Jewish.

a. They were saved then, the same way we are saved now: by faith alone!

b. *The faith of the fathers in the Old Testament era, and our faith in the New Testament are one and the same faith in Christ Jesus, although times and conditions may differ...The faith of the fathers was directed at the Christ who was to come, while ours rests in the Christ who has come.* Luther

2. Genesis 15:1-6

3. Acts 15:10-11 *Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."*

a. It is this faith alone that saves today!

b. Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*

3. Faith precedes good works v4

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

We have to believe that Cain, Abel, Seth, and these generations knew what offerings were acceptable to God.

1. Adam had walked with God in the garden and heard directly from Him
2. He had witnessed the first sacrifice in the garden after he and Eve fell into sin.
3. We have to believe that he passed down the details to Cain, Abel, Seth, etc.
4. The details of acceptable sacrifices were written down later by Moses.

5. Leviticus 1:1-4 *Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, 2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock. 3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. 4 He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.*

- a. It is believed that this was the offering Abel made by faith! A burnt offering.
- b. If the man who brought this offering would lay his hand upon the head of the animal in faith, the Lord said, “it would be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf: Faith in the promise of God!
- c. Devoting the animal to death and fire was intended to serve as a substitute for the death and burning of the sinner who offered it....in this case Abel

It is the same for us.

1. We don't have to bring anything from our herds however.

2. We have had the lamb of God Himself become our burnt offering

3. Isaiah 53:4-6 *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.*

4. Your sin may be as numerous as the sands this morning, but if you will in repentant faith take Jesus as your sin offering and hope, your iniquities will be covered, and atonement between you and the Father will be made: Faith in the promise of God

Faith precedes good works!

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

1. Abel offered the burnt offering of Leviticus one, intended to remove the guilt of sin

2. Cain offered the grain offering of Leviticus two, which was an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving.

a. Leviticus 2:1-3 *‘Now when anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it. 2 He shall then bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests; and shall take from it his handful of its fine flour and of its oil with all of its frankincense. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke as its memorial portion on the altar, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. 3 The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire.*

- b. What is wrong with a grain offering of thanksgiving? Nothing! Unless it is offered without the blood sacrifice of atonement.
- c. The grain offering always came after the burnt offering.
- d. You don't bring good works to God apart from the blood...apart from faith in the atoning work of Christ.

3. Some of you, like Cain, are getting out of order
 - a. You know you have never been truly forgiven, brought peace with God
 - b. So you try to work, work, work, and do good...and you make Cain's mistake
 - c. This is not pleasing! First comes atonement, and then comes the fruit.
4. Faith precedes good works. First comes faith...then comes works.

4. Faith is always accompanied by good works v5

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

1. Genesis 5:22-24 *Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

2. Enoch was pleasing to God because He not only believed in faith but he walked by faith: faith is always accompanied by good works
3. We are saved by faith alone...AND we are sanctified by faith alone. We are saved by grace through faith AND we walk and work by grace through faith.

a. Galatians 3:2-3 *This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*

b. *Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God. It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. 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."* Luther

4. James 2:14-26

- a. Don't get confused and think that we are saved by faith plus works.
 1. Good Works do not produce salvation
 2. Saving faith, belief, brings salvation
 3. But the Saving faith which brings salvation, also produces good works
 4. It is not the work that brings salvation...it is the faith...true faith just happens to always produce works
- b. In the words of Calvin, *"We are saved by faith alone, but a faith that saves is never alone."*

5. Faith pleases God v6

6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

We see this type of walk in Enoch. He walked with God by faith and it pleased God so He took Him!

1. Faith is coming to God convinced that He is real

2. Faith is coming to God convinced that He rewards

a. Not just a belief that God is real, but that He is a rewarder...that He is good.

b. Romans 8:28 *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

It is faith that pleases God. A faith that comes to Him, believing He is real, and believing He rewards.

1. Would you come that way to Him this morning?

a. It is the only way that you will be acceptable to God...it is the only way to please Him

b. Not by working, or trying to do good, or trying clean up your life first

c. But in faith alone to lay Your hope upon the head of Christ, our sacrificial lamb, and trust God to atone and judge your sin in Him instead of in you.

d. This is the gospel...the good news...that Christ can exchange His perfect righteousness and perfect record for all of your sin

2. *Faith is like an empty, open hand stretched out toward God, with nothing to offer and everything to receive.” Calvin of France*

3. Would you humble yourself and stretch out that empty open hand to Him today?