

SOLA FIDE

Pastor Lucas Almeida—Centra Baptist Church—October 9th, 2022

TEXT

Romans 1:16–17 (ESV)

[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the month of October, we are taking some time to think about this movement called the Protestant Reformation.

As we have been reminded every week, one of the most central words that came out of the Reformation was the word *sola*. *Sola* means only, alone. The Catholic Church was happy to affirm the authority of Scripture, the necessity of grace, the importance of faith, the centrality of Christ, and the glory of God. But the reformers fought and died to add to these the word alone!

The Five Solas of the Reformation are the five pillar doctrines the Reformers affirmed. And along with them, we too affirm them.

- Sola Scriptura = Scripture Alone
- Sola Gratia = Grace Alone
- Sola Fide = Faith Alone
- Solus Christus = Christ Alone
- Soli Deo Gloria = To the Glory of God Alone

As protestants we affirm that “Scripture alone teaches us that, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone we are saved; and all this amounts to the glory of God alone.”

This movement is important for us, because we are a part of this movement. This movement that begun 500 years ago; and has driven us back to the pure and unadulterated gospel—the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. *Sola fide*, faith alone.

Faith is a welcomed concept in the world around us. Perhaps one of the great anthems of my generation is the 1996 R. Kelly song, “I believe I can fly; I believe I can touch the sky.” But can I? Can I fly? Can I touch the sky? Obviously, not, right? That’s now how it works. Faith is only as reliable as its object; faith is only trustworthy if it corresponds with reality.

And friends, although my abilities to fly are completely unreal, nothing is more real in

this world than the promises God makes to his people. God's words are true, and in it we are reminded that he is trustworthy, faithful, steadfast, unwavering, upright. His yes is always yes, and his no is always no.

Christianity is not a call to fideism—faith without reason. Christianity is a call to faith in that which is most reasonable—God and his promises.

More specifically, Christianity is a call to faith in God and his promises that were accomplished in and through his son, Jesus Christ. Which promises did Jesus accomplish? Every promise God has made has been accomplished by Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:20—*For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.*

We are going to look today at two verses in the Book of Romans. These two verses function as the thesis statement of Romans. At the heart of Romans we find the argument that righteousness before God is only possible by faith in the gospel.

Romans was written by the apostle Paul as a missionary letter. Paul wanted to present his gospel to the believers in Rome, whom he had never met, to recruit their support to take the gospel to Spain. How did Paul present his case? He wrote the most theologically charged letter of all his writings.

After a brief greeting to the believers in Rome, Paul affirms that he is obligated to preach the gospel to all men and in our passage for today he will explain why.

THE CONTROVERSIAL GOSPEL

In Verse 16 Paul starts by saying, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel...*" I think this simple statement raises two questions that we need to answer: (1) What is the gospel and (2) why would anyone be ashamed of it?

(1) So, what is the gospel?

The word gospel simply means good news.

1 Corinthians 15:1, 3-4—Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you...[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The gospel is the central message of Christianity. Paul says it is of first importance. All we say and all we do as Christians is shaped by this message. The gospel is a message that is received by faith.

The gospel are the truths concerning Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. But not only

the truths about his life, but that these truths intersect with our lives when we believe in Jesus.

The gospel is the means by which God forgives sins. When we receive the gospel by faith, we as sinners identifying with Christ, the sinless one.

The good news we receive is that Jesus Christ died in our place. He was buried and along with him, our old sinful nature was buried also. He was risen from the dead, and if we believe in him, we too will experience eternal life.

The gospel is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The gospel was not an accident; the gospel was not God's plan B that he enacted once Adam sinned. No, God's purpose to save a people for his glory was God's plan from the beginning. It was his plan from eternity past.

1 Timothy 1:9 – [He] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

2) Why would anyone be ashamed of this gospel?

It is true that the gospel is good news, but not for everyone. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are an aroma of death to those who are perishing. The gospel is a reminder that we cannot live however we want. We cannot suppress the truth and ignore God. The gospel is an offensive message that reminds all humanity that we are not Lord of our lives.

Some of you might be tempted to feel ashamed of the gospel today. You love Jesus but your family shuns you for dissenting their beliefs. You want to live a life of purity to honor God, but your friends tell you that the Bible is just an ancient and outdated book, so you should embrace their sinful lifestyle. You want to uphold Christian morals, but your coworkers label you as being "on the wrong side of history"

Friend, let me encourage you. Although many will reject you because of the gospel, don't be ashamed of the gospel because the gospel is powerful!

THE POWERFUL GOSPEL

Paul goes on to say, still in verse 16, "...for it is the power of God for salvation..." The gospel is powerful unto salvation.

But what do we need to be saved from? We saw this last week, didn't we? We are saved

from God himself.

Romans 1:18—*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

The gospel saves us from the from God's righteous wrath that should be poured on all of us. God saves us from God. God saves us from himself.

Salvation involves an intellectual response to the gospel. Meaning, salvation requires that we understand the gospel in our minds. No one who is saved, is saved by ignorance. We are saved through the knowledge of the truth.

But salvation also involves a heart level response to the gospel. A predisposition to lovingly submit to the God. We are not fighting to simply get people to recite the truth back to us, be it through a catechism or through a sinner's prayer. We are striving so that people embrace the gospel at a heart level.

My dad often tells me the story of how my grandfather, who was a pastor in Brazil, along with a committee from his church visited a famous witch doctor in my hometown. Dad tells me that she received my grandfather and the other believers; they sung, "At the cross" to her, shared the gospel, and gave her a Bible.

She received them well and accepted the gift. But her answer to their visit was incredibly sad and disheartening. She said, "I know that the gospel is the truth, but I cannot follow the gospel." She knew the truth in her mind, but she didn't embrace it or submitted to it in her heart.

I wonder if some of you today find yourselves at a similar place today. Do you understand the gospel, but are unwilling to follow it? Friend, have you been at church your entire life and yet, do you rely on what you have done for God rather than on what God has done for you? Children, have you understood the message of the gospel that your parents have taught you? Is this message your only hope in life and in death? My prayer for you is that you would know the Lord not just in your mind, but in your heart.

Paul goes on to say in verse 16 that the gospel is the power of salvation "*to everyone who believes...*

The power of the gospel is activated in our lives by faith and not by works. All who believe means all who have faith. The gospel is not for the one who works to gain the favor of God. The gospel is for the one who believes.

In verse 17 the word faith will become very prominent. It is important to note that in the original language, faith and believe are the same word. What I want you to grasp right

now is that God's powerful gospel can only be accessed by faith, by what we believe, by what we put our trust in, and not by what we do. At the heart of the reformation that was a battle for faith and not works. It is faith alone that justifies, completely apart from works. This is what the reformers called ***Sola Fide*** or faith alone.

Romans 4:5—*And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...*

This is good news, isn't it? Christianity is not of the strong, but of weak. Christianity is not for the one who can get his act together, or pick himself up from his own bootstraps, Christianity is for the spiritual bankrupt that knows to look to Christ in faith, believe in his sacrifice, and rest in his finished work.

And friends, here is even more good news. **The gospel is for everyone without distinction.**

Paul ends verse 16 reminding us that the gospel is, *"to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

First to the Jew then to the Greek means that Salvation was made available first chronologically to the Jews, yet for God there is no distinction or all who believe are one new man in Jesus Christ. There is no distinction between nationalities, there is no distinction between ethnicities. When Peter takes the gospel to the gentiles for the first time in the book of Acts he says,

Acts 10:34–35—*Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, [35] but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

This is why at Central we don't get sidetracked with the so called "social justice" movement or any other cultural constructs to fend off prejudices. We preach the gospel and let the Holy Spirit teach us to love one another. We preach the gospel and watch our greatest differences disappear when we make CHRIST all in all, and not men.

Friends, the gospel that saves is the gospel that heals, it's the gospel that unites. It is when we stop looking at ourselves and start looking up to him who saved us that we'll find ourselves united in love, purpose, and destiny.

THE MERCIFUL GOSPEL

Paul says in verse 17 that in the gospel, *"the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith..."* Friends, this is **the content of the gospel, namely that God reveals his righteousness through faith.** In other words, God makes his righteousness available to everyone by faith.

This was a verse that puzzled Martin Luther for years. Martin Luther was a German Augustinian Monk who had a deep understanding of his sinfulness and a deep desire to be reconciled to God. So, this verse puzzled Luther because he mistakenly understood that “the righteousness of God” here, referred to the judging righteousness of God.

Martin Luther once wrote about this verse. He said, “But up till then it was...a single word in chapter one of Romans, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed’ that had stood in my way. For I hated that word “righteousness of God,” which, according to the use and costume of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand...as that by which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous live by gift of God, namely, by faith.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Do you see the incredible exchange here? This realization for Luther was like a spark that eventually brought him to the saving knowledge of Christ. Righteousness by faith is the spark that began the Reformation. Righteousness by faith, one of the pillars of the Reformation says, “If you are in Christ, God is for you, and not against you.” Do you know that to be true?

And this righteousness is available “from faith for faith” = faith all along/faith from beginning to end.

Paul ends with an Old Testament quotation. “...as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

This is a quote from the prophet Habakkuk. A few months ago we did seven week series on Habakkuk. We have this series available, along with all my notes, on Sermon Audio and also on our church’s website. If you missed it, you should go listen to it.

I think it’s important though, for us to quickly remember the context in which Habakkuk says this. So, in a nutshell here is the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk starts with a complaint from the prophet to God calling for God to judge Israel because of their sin. God responds to Habakkuk and says, “Don’t worry, I will judge Israel by sending the the Babylonians to destroy them. But then Habakkuk says, “Wait...but the Babylonians are worse than us!” And God says, “Don’t worry. I will judge them as well.”

So the question in the air is this, "Will anyone escape the judgement of God? Will anyone escape the judging righteousness of God? Is there any hope for anyone?" And God says, yes! There is hope! "The righteous shall live by faith." Those that are right before God are only right because of their faith and never their works. God justified the ungodly. God's final word for those who are his is a word of salvation, and not a word of Judgment.

Perhaps you are asking the same question in your mind today. "Is there any hope for me? Am I ungodly beyond redemption?"

Pastor Lucas, is there any hope for me even though I still carry the guilt of the sins of my youth? And God's answer to you is, "Yes! Turn from your sin and remember, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

Pastor Lucas, is there any hope for me even though I'm so struggle with sexual sin and the battle is brutal? And God's answer to you is, "Yes! Turn from your sin and remember, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

Pastor Lucas, is there any hope for me even though I can't seem to break free from my anger and this is destroying everyone around me? And God's answer to you is, "Yes! Turn from your sin and remember, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

Pastor Lucas, I'd be so ashamed to even share what is in my heart right now. Is there any hope for me? And God's answer to you is, "Yes! Turn from your sin and remember, 'The righteous shall live by faith alone in Christ alone.'"