

# Justified by Faith Alone

By Rev. Clayton Spronk

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**Bible Text:** Romans 1:17  
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## Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

**Website:** [www.graceprc.org](http://www.graceprc.org)  
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Tonight we read the word of God as is found in Romans 1 and you may notice that the text we consider tonight is the theme of the book of Romans, Romans 1:17. In connection with that text, we will read verses 16 to the end of Romans 1. So we pick up our reading at Romans 1:16. This is the word of God.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of

God, despicable, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

This far we read the word of God considering verse 17 as the text.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Do you know that you are saved? Do you have the assurance of salvation? Assurance in which you can say, "I know that God now and in the future will accept me as one of his own; that God sees me as measuring up to his own standard of holiness and righteousness"? Can you say that the thought of facing judgment at death or in the return of Jesus Christ does not frighten you but that you, indeed, look forward with hope and expectation to that judgment with the confidence that the verdict, the legal verdict that Jesus Christ will speak in that day is righteous? You're right before God? You have the right to eternal life in heaven? And can you say this even though you know that you are a sinner? Do you have the boldness to declare that even though you know that you are guilty of many sins against God, that you have violated his law, and even though you know that he is a holy God who will not at all clear the guilty, that God nevertheless is not going to declare you guilty? He's not going to hold your sin in guilt against you, he is going to forgive you that sin and declare you righteous?

This is the blessing if you can say that of the great Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the truth of justification by faith alone was rediscovered beginning with Martin Luther. In the Roman Catholic Church, there was not in the 1500s and there still is not today, assurance of salvation. Lack of assurance and fear of judgment, and this is not a slander, this is the truth, this is what characterizes the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Why is it necessary, why does the Church tell its members they must do penance? Why does the Church of Rome tell its members that they need to attend the Mass and make use of the sacraments as they are administered by the priest? Why does the Roman Catholic Church stress the need to by indulgences to pray to saints? All of these things Rome encourages its people to do because there is the fear that if you don't do enough, you might face judgment after death or when Christ comes. Maybe hell, maybe not hell, but then maybe purgatory, a place of fire and suffering until enough has been done to earn the right to go to heaven.

The Roman Catholic Church, I say, teaches a theology of doubt and that this is no slander against the Roman Catholic Church is evident from a statement made by one of the great theologians of Rome in the 1500s who studied the teaching of the Reformers and had this to say about the Reformers, that the chief heresy of the Reformation is the assurance of salvation meaning, then, that one of the chief doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is that one can never really have assurance of salvation. But then you understand that he was recognizing and recognizing rightly and accurately that this is the chief doctrine of

the Reformation, the assurance of salvation, and that assurance of salvation that is a unique characteristic of the Reformed faith is something that is experienced by Reformed believers is ours because of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

When our Reformed father, Martin Luther, contemplated Romans 1:17, he discovered that the teaching here is justification as a free gift of God for the sinner. This was the breakthrough for Luther and the spark of the Reformation. At first he didn't understand this verse that way. At first not understanding this verse in that way and understanding it rather in a Roman Catholic way, he didn't have any assurance of this text. He had no comfort from this text. But once he understood justification, salvation is by faith alone, he says, "It was as if heaven opened up for me," and he became assured of his salvation. And now for 500 years, millions and millions of Reformed believers have been able to say, "Yes, I confess my sin. I know my guilt. Nevertheless, I confess that I am right before God and am sure that I will have eternal life."

So now if you don't have assurance, is there anyone here tonight who said at the beginning, "No, I don't have that assurance"? Hear the Gospel that brings that assurance, the Gospel of justification by faith alone. And if you do have that assurance, well, then let us hear it again, anew as the doctrine that assures us of our salvation by God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Justified by faith alone. Let's notice in the first place that this is with a received righteousness and there the term that Luther liked to use is an alien righteousness, but I didn't want to lead any of the young people or the young children astray by speaking of that, but what that means is it's a righteousness outside of ourselves that is given to us, received as a gift from God. Then secondly, let's notice that this is a righteousness received by a liberating faith. Then unto a unique assurance.

In the text, we are confronted with the phrase "the righteousness of God, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith," and it doesn't matter if you're Roman Catholic or Reformed, you recognize that God is a righteous God, perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, perfectly pure. There is no spot on God's being or character. Then it's recognized that in order to be able to say, "I have eternal life and that I can live with God," one has to be judged right by that righteous God. God has to say about you, "You're right before me. You measure up, therefore you may enter into eternal life."

The Apostle Paul is teaching something that, again, the Reformed and the Roman Catholic agree upon, God as judge must pass the legal sentence, "You're right before me," to have salvation. But how does a man obtain this righteousness and how are we to understand the text in teaching us this is the way to become right with God? First we consider the answer of the Roman Catholic Church that Luther at first accepted himself, and the teaching is that the righteousness that will bring for you that verdict of God that you are right before him has to come from within you. God has to be able to look at the individual, look at you, look at me and say, "I see in you righteousness and on the basis of that righteousness, I see in you you are right before me."

Now the Roman Catholic Church and we need to be careful in understanding its teaching, does not ignore or deny the need for grace. Without grace, the Roman Catholic Church would say and does say you cannot perform any righteousness, you cannot do any good works. The idea, though, is that although God's grace is what begins the process, God's grace is really only an assisting power, a power that begins the process and then it assists you in this process so that by God's grace you do good works, you do things that are righteous and then God looks at you and says, "I see righteousness in you and on the basis of that righteousness I see in you, I declare you right before me."

So the Roman Catholic Church said this all started with baptism. At baptism, and we considered that in the faith congregation this morning, there is grace conferred automatically through the water, washing away sin. There is baptismal regeneration. The grace of God delivering from death, spiritual death, and bringing spiritual life. This is how God's righteousness is revealed and then it becomes revealed further in that God works that grace in a man assisting him to live out that life, to perform good works so that God seeing that righteousness will declare that man right.

It is the righteousness of God that justifies and it's right for God to justify you, Rome will say, because there is actual righteousness he sees in you. This whole scheme and understand, congregation, this phrase does come from the Roman Catholic Church, it's not a Reformed phrase, it's this whole scheme that led to the saying, "Heaven helps those who help themselves." That's a common way of thinking among many Christians today too. This is the way it works, God is there to begin the process of salvation, God is there throughout the process of salvation to assist the sinner in completing, adding to the grace of God, perfecting the work of grace.

Martin Luther accepted that theology and that was how he initially viewed this text, the righteousness of God refers to God as the righteous judge, first of all, who demands that I have righteousness in myself so that he may declare me right before him. That's why he became a monk. That's why he practiced many deeds of penance, why he prayed to saints. Luther was dedicated to working out the righteousness of God in his own life that God might declare him righteous, but he struggled with two things. As he sought to work out his own righteousness before God in this way, "I need to do it so that God will see it in me," he struggled with the fact that he never saw perfect righteousness in himself and he struggled, therefore, first of all then with this: that eventually the conclusion has to be made that the standard of righteousness needs to be lowered. If a sinner is ever going to be righteous before God on the basis of his own works, God is somehow going to have to say, "I don't demand of you perfection. I don't demand that you measure up in every detail to my standard of what is right." Because Luther looked at his good works and said, "None of them are perfect and either God must become unrighteous and lower his standard to save me or if God maintains his righteousness, that means because I am never perfect I can never be saved."

So he saw, first of all, the problem here is if righteousness has to be righteousness I perform, the standard has to be lowered but then, secondly, he saw that if the righteousness that makes me right before God is my own, it is lose-able, it is reversible

and the Roman Catholic Church made that very plain. You can be righteous before God today because you did attend the Mass, you did the works that were assigned to you by the priest, you have been living according to the way the Church dictates you can make yourself righteous before God, but if tomorrow you backslide, you fall into sin, you can lose that righteousness before God. That brought a crisis. You understand, this is an abstract theology, this brought a crisis in the life of Martin Luther so severe that he said that he hated this verse and that when he thought of the righteousness of God and the impossible standard that was for him to live up to, he even said he hated God until he saw the text in a new way. He saw that the righteousness of God here does not merely say to us God is a righteous God and now you have to measure up to him by performing your own acts of righteousness, but he saw that the righteousness of God here can also be taken as something that comes from God; not merely righteousness of God that he possesses, that's certainly true, God possesses righteousness but something that's God's that he gives to his people. It's a gift from God. It's a received righteousness.

Rome saw righteousness as something that God must see in us, something that we have done, but Luther came to see, "No, this is the righteousness of God that is worked out outside of us," and that's what he meant by an alien righteousness. He didn't mean it came from outer space, he meant it doesn't come from within me, it's not righteousness I perform, but it's a righteousness God works out and then he gives it to me from outside of me and when he sees that righteousness, God says, "I don't see any sin in you. I see you as perfect."

A couple common illustrations will help see the difference. The Roman Catholic Church when it saw the righteousness of God in the text saw that as medicine. Think of a man in a hospital and he's hooked up to an IV and the medicine goes into his sick body. Well, the Roman Catholic Church said this is the way it works, God is the righteous God, he makes a connection with the sinner, he infuses, infuses grace and righteousness into that person and then seeing that in that person, he justifies, declares righteous. But in the view of Luther which is also biblical, the illustration is legal or from the business world, an accounting issue. Think of a bank account. Your name is on it. In that bank account there is debt. That debt is canceled. That debt is not imputed to you. That debt is imputed to someone else. Someone else pays the debt and so now you can think of someone else who has an account and the debt is taken out of your account and put into his. But that's not all, that other person who has an account has an account filled with righteousness, filled with credit, and that credit of that person is imputed into the account with your name on it. That's biblical. Imputation is the word that the apostle used later in Romans 4 in unfolding these theme of justification by faith alone.

This is how Luther came to see the text. The righteousness of God is not what God sees in me, but this righteousness that God sees in me, he sees in another and gives to me. And Rome said, "That's a fiction. That's not fair. That's not reality." Now you need to understand we're not talking about a fiction here, something that's not fair. Think about it. If the account in your name has a debt that someone else pays in your name, the bank isn't going to come to you and say, "No, this isn't fair! This isn't reality! You can't have your debt canceled." The bank will be satisfied. Your debt has been paid. And if someone

comes and in your name deposits a huge amount of money, the bank isn't going to say, "That's not fair! This isn't really yours! You can't have this." But it's your money and that's the kind of transaction reality, spiritual reality, the Apostle Paul is teaching here in Romans 1:17. There is a canceling of your debt in such a way that your debt really is gone, before the eyes of God rightly gone, so that as the Heidelberg Catechism tells us in Lord's Day 32, God says it's as if you never sinned and not because you actually got rid of that debt but someone else really did it for you. Then God looks at you and sees you as if you have performed all the righteousness of the law of God, not because you did it but someone else did it for you and now you have received the credit for that. That's the righteousness of God that is given to you as the apostle explains it here in the text.

When you think of that language, beautiful language of the Heidelberg Catechism, language that I think I've heard enough of Reverend Overloop's preaching to know he loves that language and he reminds you of it often, as if I had not committed any sin before God and it's as if I had performed all righteousness. That comes from Martin Luther when he said, "Mine are Christ living, doing, speaking. His suffering and dying mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, and died as he did."

Now that's the truth of the righteousness of God in the text but now let's take a moment to consider whether Luther was right to say this is how to understand the righteousness of God in the text. That's something you must do to measure up but something God gives you so that you will measure up before him. First of all, to understand that Luther was right we need to read this passage in connection with verse 16 where the Apostle Paul says to the Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Then says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." The apostle here is declaring good news to sinners, declaring good news to people who by nature are guilty and worthy of condemnation, and he is declaring here good news, God has worked this out for you. This isn't the good news, this would be bad news, for you to stand before the righteous God and somehow you have to make yourself right before him. No, no, no, this is the good news: God has done this for you. You're guilty, God has taken that guilt away and he has fulfilled all righteousness and he gives that to you so that you are right before him.

That comes out in the text, too, in the term "revealed." Now when you read that word, "the righteousness of God is revealed," don't read that merely this way as something that was hidden is made known. Yes, the word "revealed" in the Scripture can mean that. When a young man reveals his love to a woman, it can mean that. She didn't know before but now he makes it known to her that he loves her. But when a husband reveals his love to his wife, that doesn't simply mean she didn't know it and now he's making it known but it means that he's working it out and he's demonstrating it, he's showing it. That's the idea here. It's not merely that we didn't know that we were righteous in Christ and God makes that known to us, but it's God revealing his working out of the righteousness, God saying, "Know this, you were unrighteous and you could do nothing to make yourself righteous but I have worked that out for you."

The term "revealed," then, is where the Apostle Paul is referring to Christ even though he doesn't mention him here in the text. Who has saved us from guilt? Who has earned righteousness for us? God doesn't reveal that as something that we need to do on our own but he reveals that in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5 he speaks of being justified through Jesus Christ and in that great chapter in verse 17, he says, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." What he's saying is that through this one man that God has revealed, first of all, that there is forgiveness of sins through his death, for while we were sinners Christ died for us. There is the revealing of God's righteousness in taking away our guilt, but then through this man, through his death, through his life, there is righteousness and God has revealed through Jesus Christ the righteousness that is ours and he reveals it through the preaching of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul couldn't wait to go to Rome and to preach to sinners in Rome, "This is the righteousness of God, through Jesus Christ for all who believe. He has paid and covered your guilt. He has earned your righteousness and that does become our righteousness by faith." The apostle speaks of faith here in the text with the two phrases when he says, "it is revealed from faith to faith, and the just shall live by faith." And the faith that he is referring to here now is not the body of truth that we believe, that's sometimes what faith can refer to, what we believe unto eternal life. But the faith here, rather refers to the instrument that God uses to connect us to Jesus Christ, to connect us to the forgiveness of sins through him and to his righteousness.

What a wonderful thing faith is, that bond that unites us to Jesus Christ. The idea is this, if you are not connected to Jesus Christ by faith, you have nothing but guilt, but if you are connected to Jesus Christ by faith, then your guilt is imputed to him and that's the full truth of Psalm 32. We sang that Psalter 83, "Blessed is the man to whom God doesn't impute his sin." What does that mean? God doesn't impute my sin to me because he's imputing it to Jesus Christ. He gave it to him and said to Jesus Christ, "You're responsible for the sins of my people. You need to pay for them." Then not imputing my sin to me but to Christ to pay for them, he imputes to me all the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith.

You understand, then, the teaching of the Apostle Paul when he says, "You're saved by faith," is don't look at your faith and say, "Because I believe in Jesus Christ, that's what saves me," but understand faith this way, it's an instrument God uses, an instrument Jesus Christ uses to save me. If you want to think of faith as a hand, you may do that. Our Confessions even speak of faith as a hand but don't think of faith now as a hand that reaches out to Christ to give something to Christ to have salvation, but think of faith as a hand that is empty and that receives Christ and his righteousness alone for salvation.

That's the nature of faith. It looks only to Christ. I'm not going to look at my works. I'm not going to take credit for what I have done, but look only to Christ for my salvation. And that's what the two phrases in the text emphasize. We are justified by faith alone, from faith to faith. Now that phrase in the passage is very difficult to interpret and if you contemplate that phrase later on tonight, you could spend much time thinking about what

is the Apostle Paul communicating here? The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith and here the NIV probably is on the right track when it interprets or rather translates this phrase this way, it's from faith first to last, and what that stresses, then, is salvation begins by faith alone, continues to be by faith alone, is always by faith alone.

The Apostle Paul might not have known this but we can say the Holy Spirit would know that in the history of the church many errors would arise in the Roman Catholic Church, would arise even in the Reformed Church through the Arminians and even today through the Federal Vision and many errors would teach something like this: salvation begins by faith alone and by grace alone but then it has to be perfected by the doing of good works, or as the Arminian would say, through the sinner exercising his free will and cooperating with grace. The Apostle Paul here in Romans 1:17 is saying, "Rest in Christ. Rest in Christ in the beginning. Rest in Christ by faith tomorrow and always as the only one who is your Savior." And we need to understand that even though the Roman Catholic Church and this is true as I said earlier in the sermon, speaks of grace, the Arminians will speak of grace, salvation is by grace, by faith and works, we need to hear the Apostle Paul saying here in this text it's by faith beginning to end or as he says in Galatians 5:4 to the Galatians who had begun to think that salvation was by faith and by works such as the work of circumcision, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." And what he is saying is if anyone says, "I believe in salvation by grace," but then they want to mix that with works, works of the law, works that man must perform, he's saying there's no grace there. You are fallen from grace for salvation is either by grace or by works alone and the idea here of the text in Romans 1:17 is faith to faith, meaning salvation is by faith alone, by grace alone always.

But then there is also perhaps in this context, this meaning to the apostle's word. There is not repetition here, salvation is from faith to faith, but what he's doing is he's emphasizing this is the way it works for every sinner, for everyone who believes salvation is by faith. It's not different for the Jew than it is for the Greek. It's not different for men or women or anyone in the congregation. This is the only way that sinners are saved, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now on the one hand, this is humbling and may be humbling to some here tonight who need to be humbled, who like to think about themselves not in comparison to God and his righteousness but in comparison to other people in the church. That was the way that the Jews thought and that's the way that we might sometimes think too, "What kind of a person am I compared to other people? And the way God saves me might be different from the way he saves that person." Much worse, needs more grace. The apostle says, "No, God doesn't save good people, he saves sinners and everyone who is saved is saved only by a faith that says, 'I am a sinner and I find my salvation only in Jesus Christ.'"

But then again, maybe there is one who needs to be lifted up who does have a tendency to compare himself to others, has a tendency to say, "I am a unique kind of sinner. I'm much worse than others. It makes sense that God may by grace through faith save that person but not me. I'm much worse." But this was God's word to a David, a murderer, an adulterer, by faith forgiven. God's word to the Apostle Paul, the persecutor and a



murderer, by faith forgiven. So don't think you're too great a sinner, too fallen, too evil. God by faith through Jesus Christ by grace saves all who believe.

Then there's the phrase, "the just shall live by faith." I do not take the Apostle Paul here to be speaking about the way that we live and perform good works out of faith, although that is a truth that he will go on to stress here in the book of Romans, especially in Romans 6. He will go on to say that if anyone thinks, "I can sin that grace may abound," and so abuse the truth of salvation by grace alone, let him know that he doesn't understand what salvation by grace alone really is, and let us as Protestant Reformed people keep that in mind too. We believe in sovereign grace, salvation is by sovereign grace alone, but if anyone thinks, and it's possible that among our young people or among the members of our congregation there may be some who think, "Because I am saved by grace alone, it doesn't matter how I live," the answer of the Apostle Paul in the Reformed faith is no one who truly understands salvation by grace alone can think that way. God forbid!

And let us understand that in teaching salvation by sovereign grace through faith alone, what the Apostle Paul is doing is he is establishing the true doctrine of living the Christian life of performing good works out of faith because he says if you are living by faith in Jesus Christ, you have life, it's impossible for you to live as a dead sinner. You must bring forth fruits. You must show that life by doing good works.

But here he's not speaking so much about the life that you live by faith but he's speaking about the fact that you are dead and this is how you live, by faith, by God uniting you to Jesus Christ. This is how a dead sinner is brought from guilt and sin and death to life and salvation, and what a liberating faith that is. Luther understood this. He was in bondage when he thought, "Salvation is something I need to work out myself. Salvation depends upon me doing enough, doing something to add to the grace of God." But what a liberating thought, what a wonderful Gospel, what a wonderful thing when our Baptism Form in Lord's Supper Form comes and says, "Sinners, do not be dejected, do not be downcast, discouraged because there is sin in you that remains in you against your will but look to Christ, look outside of yourself and see that all your sins are forgiven through him."

We live in hope, not seeking to earn salvation but in the hope that says salvation is earned for me through Jesus Christ and, therefore, our comfort, our unique comfort, two things here, our unique comfort, first of all, is full assurance. In the Roman Catholic Church or in the Arminian scheme of salvation, there may be talk about salvation assurance but it will be admitted that this assurance is only partial. You may have assurance today but Rome would even say if you claim to have full assurance, you're proud and you can lose that assurance. Martin Luther was right to respond, "If assurance is only partial, it's not full assurance, it's not assurance at all. I need the full assurance that is given to me in the word of God that I may know that though I am an ungodly sinner, I am right before God; that God is going to look at me and he's going to say, 'As I look at you and compare you to my own righteousness and holiness, I see you as measuring up perfectly and I see no sin.'"

That's the assurance that we have in justification by faith alone. Do you understand? If you are justified not on what you do but through Jesus Christ, that means God is never going to see any past sin, God is never going to see any sin that you are guilty of today and in the future God's never going to say, "When I look at you I see you and I see sin." But he only ever says, "I see Christ in perfect righteousness." That's full assurance.

Then understand that it is by faith alone. There is no other way to have the assurance of salvation. Now you know that and you perhaps theologically can point out all of the errors of the works righteousness theology of the Judaizers, the Roman Catholic Church or many other false theologies, but is there anyone here who has been struggling with assurance who might have to start with this, admitting, This is because I've been trying to earn it. I've been trying to point at my own works maybe not in a way where I say explicitly, 'I'm trying to earn my salvation,' but I have fallen into that sin of comparing myself to others and thinking that by what I have done, what I have accomplished, I have distinguished myself from others." No, it's only when by faith we look away from self to Christ that we have assurance. Or here's another form of works righteousness we can fall into, "It's not until I confess enough, beat myself up because of my sin, that I can know that I am saved." You know, that's a certain Puritan form of works righteousness that we might fall into as well. Or there is the seeking of assurance sometimes with refusing to confess sin.

Yes, you need to ask yourself that tonight too if you do not have assurance. You know, that was David's problem. For nine months he ran away from God, he ran away from the word of God testifying against him because of his sin. This was how he was going to deal with his sin, he was going to run away from it, not bring it before God and confess that he was an ungodly unrighteous sinner, and his bones roared and the hand of God was heavy upon him and he knew no peace. The word of God says to you tonight there is one thing to do, look to Christ by faith alone. Trust that through him God has worked out the taking away of your guilt and the imputation of righteousness. Do you confess your sin? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Then God through his word and through the preaching tonight says, "I see no sin in you but when I look at you I see Christ and I declare you righteous." Amen.

*Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy word tonight which is the theme of our Reformed faith, precious to us, and really the theme of the whole of Scripture. How we thank thee, O God, that thou hast liberated us from fear and doubt, thou hast liberated us from the guilt of sin and from the bondage of thinking we somehow have to save ourselves in any way from our sin. How thankful we are for that theme not only of salvation by grace alone but that theme of comfort and peace, that not only theologically but also experientially we may know and rejoice in the salvation that we have by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, right before thee now and forever. Amen.*