

Welcome to Bible Insights with Wayne Conrad. The entrance of your words gives light.

It gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:130 Today's topic-

Bible Insights

Reformation Issues

The Protestant Reformations or Evangelical Awakening I of the 16th century involved many issues. But the central issue was the sufficiency of the work of Jesus Christ for the salvation of people. The Medieval Roman Catholic church taught basically salvation by religious works. They did not deny grace but it understood differently. In their thinking Christ's death opened the means of salvation which was entrusted to the church. Sacraments or religious ceremonies plus good deeds were seen as agents of or contributors to the salvation of people. Salvation was and is channeled through the sacraments which are found in and administered by the church's priesthood.

To the Reformers and Biblical writers, however, salvation which consisted of the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and being declared righteous before God, was and is by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith and faith alone. Romans 3: ²¹ *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—* ²² *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.* Romans 4:5 ⁵ *And to the one who does not work but believes in^[a] him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.*

Thus faith laid hold of the all-sufficient work of Christ. In fact, faith itself was and is the result of the internal work of the Spirit in connection with the hearing of the Gospel. Faith justifies by virtue of its content, Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholic sacramentalism taught a “both-and” theology. The church taught and teaches grace and free will, faith and/plus works, Scripture and the Church’s interpretation and tradition, Christ and Mary and saints. In contrast, Protestant evangelicalism recovered the Biblical gospel of Christ plus nothing! Some later used Latin phrases or mottos sum up the major truths recovered: Sola Gratis (grace alone), Sola Fide (faith alone), Sola Scripture (Scripture alone), Solus Christus (Christ alone), and all for the glory of God alone (Soli Deo Gloria)!

The four basic ideas of New Testament Christianity re-discovered at the Reformation can be briefly summarized. The Reformers appealed to the Scriptures, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, as the infallible norm for faith and practice. Through and in the written Word, which was the creation of God through men inspired of the Holy Spirit, God speaks. Thus he nourishes, feeds and sustains his people and rules over his church (his assemblies).

The regenerate mind is capable of understanding Scripture through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is the original historical source of revelation and the standard for judging all revelations, traditions, and religious experiences. Men may err no matter their religious positions or title, but God’s Word remains true forever.

One motto expressed and continues to express the heart of the gospel: **Christ alone.**

Jesus is the unique Person sent from God; he is the appointed Savior, the God-Man. His cross stands at the center of the gospel. There Jesus died in our place and offered to God a perfect sufficient sacrifice for sin. By his death and resurrection, he delivered us from sin, death, and the devil. He made the all-sufficient atonement, and his ransom was a complete satisfaction for sin. To attempt to supplement his work or extend it by a sacramental re-enactment such as is done in the Mass was to deny the infinite value of his once-for-all sacrifice.

Listen to the words of Hebrews 10:11-18; and Hebrews 9:25-28.

Hebrews 10:11-18

¹¹ Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.^[a] ¹³ He is now waiting until his enemies are made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified. ¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For after he says:

**¹⁶ This is the covenant I will make with them
after those days,
the Lord says,**

**I will put my laws on their hearts
and write them on their minds,
¹⁷ and I will never again remember
their sins** and their lawless acts.^[b]

¹⁸ Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Hebrews 9:25-28

²⁵ He did not do this to offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the sanctuary yearly with the blood of another. ²⁶ Otherwise, he would have had to suffer many times since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment— ²⁸ so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but^[a] to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

People cannot be part savior of themselves or of others. Jesus' death, because of his person, is so unique and powerful that it cannot be repeated or renewed.

Sola Gratia, Salvation by grace alone, expresses the truth for which Paul, Luther, Calvin, and many others gave their lives in ministry. Paul expresses it in these

words, “He saves us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy”(Titus 3:5).

It is not our own sense of sorrow and deeds of penance or good deeds of mercy that saves us – but only God’s undeserved compassion and lovingkindness. Mankind, people, are so lost, so fallen, that God must create in them a new heart, a new will to enable them to lean upon Christ. Salvation is of the Lord. We are saved by the free grace of God. It is a donation, a gift earned for us by Jesus Christ. “Solely by grace” means that our hope for salvation lies not in our self-induced changes of behavior but in the impartation of life. We are saved by grace; we are empowered by grace, and we are kept by grace.

But God’s grace operates through faith alone (**sola fide**). This faith is defined as the commitment of the whole person to the living Christ manifested in the gospel. We are not Christians by automatic bestowals of grace by means of religious ritual through priests. God saves us by his grace through raising us from spiritual death and awakening in us faith in Jesus, the Son of God. When we place our faith in Christ alone, his perfect righteousness is credited to us and we are accepted as God’s child. By grace are we saved through faith so that no man can boast.

Praise be to God for his all-gracious work in saving lost sinners who have no merit except that which is given to them by God because of Christ Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. Amen.

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