

Peace: All is Well

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- [0:00] Well, here we are, the day before Christmas, and we're studying the five solas of the Reformation. Five foundational truths that were revived 500 years ago.
- ! I say revived. They had been covered up and buried, and God in His grace uncovered them, covered up to most of the church. Not all of the church, but to most.
- And so, what was the first sola? Sola Scripturus. The Scripture alone. Foundational to how we even know what salvation is.
- Where do we get our information about this salvation? Well, church tradition can be helpful, but the Scripture alone is the final arbiter, and tradition itself must be judged by the Scriptures, the written Word of God.
- The second sola, last week? Grace alone. Salvation is not by man's abilities, man's merit, man's worth, but by God's grace alone, expressed in what Jesus Christ has done for sinners at the cross.
- [1:10] The third sola is what we take up today. Faith alone. And this third sola answers the question, how can a sinner be declared righteous before a holy God?
- It's a pertinent question, isn't it? It's not just something for the theologians in their ivory towers. It's something that every man, woman, boy, and girl has to face, or will face one day, as they meet this holy God in judgment.
- How? Is there a way, if so, how can I, a sinner, be declared right with this holy God? Now, we're dealing then with a doctrine of justification.
- It's a legal matter, and it takes us into the courtroom of heaven. And God is the judge upon the throne, and he makes a legal declaration in his courtroom of justifying the person being tried.
- Now, that means he's declaring, he's making a declaration. Justification does not make us righteous on the inside. That's the new birth, and sanctification, and glorification.
- [2:30] That changes us on the inside and makes us righteous in here. But justification is only the declaration that before the eyes of God, you are righteous.
- You are right with God. So, it's the verdict that the judge announces, that upon examining me and my case, God the judge brings down the gavel and announces the verdict, not guilty, but righteous.
- He is right with God. I have nothing against this man, and my laws have nothing against this man. I and my laws are satisfied with him.
- He's in perfect accord with this law. And so, that standing before God is declared. And that, as being righteous, that's justification.
- We're justified. Now, the million-dollar question, then, is what does it take to get to that point where God declares this right with himself? Now, everyone, as far as I know, Roman Catholics and Protestants together agree that faith is important for justification.

[3 : 45] No one is leaving faith out of the equation. You'd have to throw away too much of the Bible, I guess. So, we all agree on that. But Rome clearly teaches that sinners are justified before God by faith plus works.

Faith plus works. Whereas the Protestant Reformers replied, no, we are justified by faith alone, apart from the works of the law.

In fact, we're justified even before we do any works before God. Now, you can see there's a notion of difference between those two views.

And it hangs on that one little word again, sola. We're saved by, we're justified by faith alone. Well, who's right?

How do we decide who's right? I want two words. There we go. Okay. Because Rome would say, you're right, Scott.

[4 : 51] It's the scripture. Plus, church tradition. So, it's not enough to say the scripture. The scripture alone, at least in this debate. That's why the solas are so important.

So, to the scriptures alone, we must go to decide this debate of how a sinner is justified before God. And when we do, and go to the Bible, does it address this question?

Well, in reality, that's the issue that's being addressed from Genesis to Revelation, isn't it? It's the whole Bible is addressing this problem. Since chapter 3 of Genesis, we're sinners.

Now, is there any way to be right with God? And so, yes, the Bible addresses this subject.

Now, a question. Was Roman Catholicism the first to teach that justification is by faith plus works? No, Jim?

[5 : 55] Yeah, that's right. There weren't the first. Where else did it crop up before Rome? Okay.

In the Galatian churches? Even before that? The Pharisees. Even before that? Well, yes, in one sense, sin was such a thing that it made Pharisees of men, didn't it?

It made legalists of men. But the Old Testament prophets were constantly having to deal with Israel, thinking that they were right with God, because, after all, they have the temple of God.

The temple, the temple, the temple. We're safe. We have the temple. Or the Ark of the Covenant. And by something that they do, something that they did, they thought they were safe in their relationship with God.

And the prophets kept having to come and bang on them for that. So we find this problem of legalism clear back in the Old Testament. It was indeed the prevailing view within Judaism in the days of Christ on the earth.

[7 : 08] He was constantly battling, wasn't he, with the scribes and the Pharisees, the leading religious teachers on this very point. They taught faith in God plus works.

So to some, Luke 18, 9, to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.

Two men went up into the temple to pray. Why did he need to tell that parable? Because there was this problem of faith plus works. And so Jesus addresses it.

You've got the tax collector and the Pharisee. And they both had some element of faith, we might say. They're both praying to a God they can't see. So the Pharisees got his faith.

But his prayer gives away something else. What's he pray about? Himself. What he hasn't done.

[8 : 09] I thank you God I'm not like this guy and that guy and especially like this tax collector over here. No, rather, here's what I have done. I fasted and tithed and all the rest. So it's all about his works that he presents before God as he comes to the temple.

Whereas the tax collector stood afar off and went so much as lift his eyes to heaven but beat on his breast and cried, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Not one good thing to say for himself.

He didn't clean himself up first with some obedience to the law and then say, now God, have I done enough to be right with you? Now have mercy on me.

But just as I am, without one plea, I cast myself upon your mercy. Have mercy on me. That's faith alone, isn't it?

Without the works of the law. He hadn't done any works of the law. And Jesus says, I tell you, that this man, not the other, went home, what?

[9:17] Justified. The gavel fell at that moment that he cried for mercy. The gavel fell, not guilty, righteous. I'm good with this guy, God says.

He's good with me. He's righteous in my sight. He didn't go home and try to do enough good works to get God to justify him later.

It was on the spot declaration of righteousness. He went home justified. So that means he left the temple. The first step out of the temple, he was justified.

There was nothing to do before getting justified. It was faith alone, apart from works. So the Pharisees were legalists.

They said, yes, you've got to have faith in God, but it really comes down to what you do. Have you done enough works to be justified before God? And because of that teaching, Jesus said to them, you shut the kingdom of God in men's faces.

[10:27] You yourselves don't enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to enter. How did they shut the door in their faces? Well, you've got to do these works, you see, before you can get in. Well, they're slamming the door.

The sinner can't do good works. The heart's bad. How can anything good proceed out of a bad heart? They shut the door in men's faces. And so Jesus says, you travel over land and sea to make a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Legalism never saved one soul. Faith plus works of the law never saved anyone. Well, I say then that we have this problem of faith plus works in the Old Testament, and even in the time of Jesus' life on earth.

But after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension to heaven, we find that legalism wormed its way, faith plus works wormed its way into Christianity itself.

The apostle Paul, remember, had to contend with Judaizers within Christianity who taught justification by faith in Jesus Christ plus observing the law.

[11:42] Remember, they came all the way from Jerusalem up to Antioch teaching that unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.

Acts 15.1. And boy, did that set Paul off in Barnabas, and they headed down to Jerusalem to get this matter settled. This is not a minor thing. Are we saved by faith in Jesus Christ plus circumcision, the works of the law, or not?

And that error was spreading from Jerusalem all the way up to Antioch in Syria. That's missionary vision with their legalism.

And beyond, indeed, Paul has to deal with it in so many of his letters to the churches. As was mentioned, the book of Galatians, Paul deals head on with this legal error, or this fatal error, doesn't he?

And he calls faith in Christ plus works of the law another gospel, which is no gospel. And it brings the curse, the anathema of God, whoever preaches it, be it me or an angel from heaven, Paul says.

- [12:53] Listen to Galatians 2.15 and 16. We who are Jews by birth and not Gentiles, sinners, know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.
- So we have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law. Because by observing the law, no one will be justified.
- You see the two points that Paul keeps making over and over to the Galatian churches? Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not by works of the law.
- There's both affirmation, it's by faith in Christ, and there's what? Denial. It's not by the works of the law.
- So when you put those two together, what do you have? It's by faith, not by works. You have sola fide, by faith alone, don't you?
- [13:55] So Paul was preaching, by faith alone we are declared righteous. These two don't mix. It's not a little bit of God and a little bit of man. It's not a little bit of faith and a little bit of works.
- Now, the book of Romans perhaps is the most methodical declaration of the gospel, and I just want to turn you there.
- Turn to Romans, and I want you to see that Paul hits this point of justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law.
- He introduces himself, who he is, and his purpose in writing the letter, and who he's writing to, and then he hits upon the theme of his book in verse 16 and 17.
- I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
- [15:00] For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.
- Paul, why aren't you ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ that you're now going to unfold to the Romans? Because it works. There's nothing defective to be ashamed about it.
- It does what it claims to do. It actually saves sinners. It actually justifies them. It makes them right with God. It changes their eternal destiny from hell to heaven. Would you be ashamed of such a medicine if you had it in a bottle?
- No, you wouldn't. And Paul says, that's what we have in the gospel. Something that really works. It really saves sinners. All kinds of sinners. Jews, Gentiles. And in this gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed.
- Okay, so it's not a righteousness of our own. It's a righteousness from God that is by faith. With some of our works, Paul?
- [16:12] No, it's by faith from first to last. There's no room. There's no room for works. It's all by faith from first to last. As it is written. This isn't a new doctrine.
- It didn't start with me. As it's written. He quotes Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 4. As it's written. The justified one, the righteous one, will live by his faith.
- So, that's where he starts this. This proclamation of the gospel. And, it's not by our works because we don't have any.
- And that's what he is so intent in the next three chapters. Chapter 1, 2, and 3. He's rounding up all the cattle in the field.
- The Jews, the Gentiles. He's going to show that none of them have kept the law perfectly. The Jews who had the written law and the Gentiles who had not the written law but had it written on their hearts.

[17:11] Their consciences bearing witness to them about the things of the law. And so, he proceeds with why do we need this gospel about a righteousness from God? Because we don't have any of our own.

Remember how he says there's not one righteous? Chapter 3. Not one who does good. No, not one. Look then at chapter 3 and verse 19.

He's summing up now. He's about to shift gears and to set forth the solution to this problem. But here's how he rounds out the problem of none righteous. Verse 19 of chapter 3.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable or guilty before God.

Every mouth silenced because not one is righteous. Because, verse 20, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.

[18:14] Rather, through the law we become conscious, aware of our sins. So the law isn't there to save us. It's there to make us aware of our sin. And that's what it has done with Jew and Gentile without exception.

But now. And here's the whole hinge then. This is why we need a righteousness outside of ourselves. We don't have any. But now, verse 21, a righteousness from God apart from law, apart from law keeping, has been made known to which the law and the prophets, the Old Testament scriptures, testify.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. And it's not just the Jews who believe.

It's all who believe. For there's no difference. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified freely. There's our word, justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

[19:25] He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. So, this justification is not by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.

And that's what excludes boasting as he ends out the chapter. It's the way Abraham was justified before God. Chapter 4, that's the way David was justified before God.

Chapter 4, by their faith. And chapter 5, verse 1, therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, he's nailing it down, isn't he? Justification by faith alone. Turn over to Romans 10. I want you to see that this was the great problem of the Israelites in Paul's day as he speaks from experience.

It was his own experience, wasn't it? Before God saved him. And so he says in Romans 10, brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved for I can testify about them that they're zealous for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

[20:40] How so, Paul? Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

It's a righteousness from God in Christ because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. That's God's way of righteousness.

That's God's way of justification. It's by faith in Jesus Christ. But they didn't know. That doctrine. They were blinded to it by their own pride and self-righteousness so they tried to establish their own righteousness before God.

And that's why Paul says I'm doing all I can praying and preaching this gospel that they might be saved and abandon their own hope in themselves and put all the weight of their trust on the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ.

That was Paul's experience. He gets more autobiographical in Philippians or in Philippians doesn't he when he says you know I grew up a Jew a Pharisee of the Pharisees and I had all this stuff going for me of who I was and what I did and as to the law well I had this legalistic righteousness that was faultless.

[21:59] Chapter 3 and verse 6 but whatever was to my profit what I thought to be gained then I now count as lost that I might have Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith those words from God by faith he keeps hammering and hammering and says that's what I needed to know and I came to know when God enlightened me and saved me and that's what my people need to know and so the reformers planted their flags with the scripture saying justification is by faith alone without the works of the law now the Roman Catholic position on justification is very different as can be seen in many of their teachings but especially in their doctrine of penance it's one of their sacraments the sacrament of penance the Roman Catholic

Church teaches that their church that's important for you to know it's their church not our church their church has a treasury of merit that Mary and the saints have not only done enough good deeds to merit salvation for themselves but they have gone over and above their duty good works beyond what they needed for themselves those are called works of super irrigation it's like extra credit works over and above their need and these works of super irrigation are stored up in a great treasury of merit that the Roman Catholic Church can draw upon for others like you and me who might need some extra merit so you draw upon this merit through the sacrament of penance so you sin and your guilty conscience takes you to confess your sin to the priest the Roman

Catholic priest who has access to this treasury of merit and he will assign you certain acts of penance not repentance this is something completely different from repentance repentance is just renouncing right there on the spot renouncing your old way and your sin works of penance were things that you would need to do to make up for your sin to make satisfaction for your sin and so you would need to pray so many hail marys pray through the rosary so many times do so many good works give money fast attend masses works of service wearing a crucifix visiting holy places and relics and all kinds of things that you must do and the number of them and the size of them is based on the number and size of the sins that you confess and so you're you're trying to balance out the scales and as you do these good works you are able to draw from that merit that treasury of merit in order for your sins to be forgiven and to lessen your punishment here on earth and also your stay in purgatory when you die so these acts of penance are required in order for your confessed sins to be forgiven it's a system a system of good works that in part enables us to merit forgiveness if we've done and if we've done enough of them to finally be justified before God and so he's watching he's watching to see have you done and then he'll bring the gavel down yes she's justified now she's right with me in the court and the law of heaven well it's a way to work off your sins like some of our courts would say and give you certain things to do to work off your transgression can you see what it does to assurance it just slaughters it because you can never be sure if you've done enough until that final day of judgment when God brings the gavel down and you're just in fear and trepidation even yet to know whether it's going to be justified or damned so what does this do to Jesus words to the tax collector in his parable

God be merciful to me a sinner and Jesus would have to say to him well now you go home and you pray so many hail Marys and do so many good deeds and then we'll talk about justification later you see it would turn the thing right up on its head but Jesus says that man went home justified it's done before he did any works and so it attacks the full sufficiency of Christ's sufferings it adds man's works together with his faith our confession of faith denies the possibility of there even being works of super irrigation that we can ever do more than our duty to God and purchase these extra works for others we all come short saints Mary we're in the same boat now we do believe that there is a treasury of merit to draw upon and it's all in Jesus Christ his perfect obedience is one a perfect righteousness righteousness that every believing sinner who turns away and renounces anything of self and casts his whole weight upon

Christ draws upon that treasury of merit and it is put to our account and we're justified we're declared right with God because of what Jesus did his perfect obedience even as by the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners so by the obedience of the one man Jesus Christ the many were made righteous and so there is a treasury of merit it's not found in the church of Rome or any other church it's found in Jesus Christ alone perfect righteousness before God is not a as Toby Bala said in his testimony I borrow from it it's not a goal to achieve but a gift to receive we receive righteousness before God as a gift to be received well you see the difference then between Rome's view of justification and the view of scripture and the view of the reformers stark contrast and once the protestant reformation declared it was by faith alone without the works of man

[28:39] Rome responded in the council of Trent to the protestant reformation and they said in their canon 29 if anyone says that justification is by faith alone where'd they get that language they got it from Luther and the reformers they're responding to the protestant doctrine which is the biblical doctrine if anyone says that justification is by faith alone without the sacrament of penance contrary to what the holy Roman and universal church instructed by Christ and his apostles has hitherto professed observed and taught let him be anathema so they would add anathema to Paul's anathema that if anybody believes what Paul teaches what Luther teaches they wouldn't say what Paul teaches they thought Paul taught what they're saying but the point is that they said that the reformers were cursed and any of us who believe that we're justified by faith alone apart from the works of the law we're under their curse and it's never been removed because that's part of the infallible church tradition and so

Rome made her viewpoint clear where they stand on this matter now last week we saw that salvation is by grace alone the law says do this and you will live grace says it's all done for you by Jesus Christ and yet what we're seeing this morning is that no one is saved apart from faith and that is not something that God does no you must believe you must put your faith in this savior in order for you to believe faith is not something God will do for us it is clearly our response to what God in the gospel has done for us in Jesus Christ whosoever believes in me shall not perish but have everlasting life but you must believe that's as clear as anything else in the gospel isn't it if you don't believe the wrath of

God still remains on you and it's also clear that God doesn't do the believing for us we must do the believing so here's my question you'll need your thinking caps if saving faith is something you do then are you not contributing something to your salvation and does that not undermine the whole teaching that salvation is by grace alone four is open you understand the problem if faith is something you must do to be saved to be justified before God doesn't that mean then that salvation is not by grace alone but there is then cooperation God does his part man does his part sorry good so where does our salvation begin well as far as back as we can go the

Bible tells us God chose us to be in Christ and once he chose us to be in Christ that included all the blessings of salvation regeneration the new birth!

And so as James says in James 1 18 he chose to give us birth! So he gives us birth!

[32:20] We become new creatures and now we are able as Rex said to reach out in faith to Jesus Christ in our fallen state we were dead and our wills were perverse and would not choose him if we had a thousand lives to live we still would not have chosen him we would have perished in our sins so that faith with faith we believe on Christ is given to us it's a fruit of God's grace isn't it why else does it not contribute does faith not contribute anything to our salvation as far as merit as far as worth and God says oh wow we've got to treat this guy differently because he's got faith okay it's a gift from God that's right Ephesians 2 8 and 9 and other verses why else look at

Romans chapter 4 and verse 16 exactly right Dave the faith is not a meritorious act it's a receiving grace Romans chapter 4 and verse 16 therefore the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace how does the promise of eternal life forgiveness of sins righteousness with God how does it come it comes by faith so that it might be by grace you see these two do not war against each other oh since it's my faith I guess it can't be by grace rather Paul is arguing the very opposite that because it is by faith it must be grace in other words there must be something about the nature of faith itself saving faith that proves and guarantees that salvation is by grace alone so we we see

Ephesians 2 8 by grace are you say through faith Paul's not undermining grace by talking about salvation by faith yes it's your faith you must you must believe you must do the believing and trusting but it only proves that salvation is by grace because of what faith is Dave says it's the empty hands held out to receive you see faith is a grace that receives is there anything to brag about that I've received no all the praise is there his grace put it in my hand it was empty hands hands that renounced anything in self to merit God's righteousness God's favor his justification remember how Jesus put it to Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness and whoever looked lived even so must the son of man be lifted up that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life they were bitten the poison was in their veins they're going to die and they must look to live that's a look for the remedy away from the home remedies of self anything here it's saying over there's the remedy and

I'm looking it was a look of faith wasn't it and that's what Jesus is telling Nicodemus so the son of man must be lifted up that whoever believes whoever looks to him it's a look away from anything in self and looking only to Christ for life and health and peace naked come to thee for dress look to thee for grace fall I to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die you see faith comes to Christ to do all the saving work it receives Christ and in receiving Christ it receives righteousness and eternal life in Christ so faith contributes absolutely nothing to salvation it's rather the repudiation that I have anything to bring it says there is my righteousness there is my obedience there's my punishment there's my only hope for heaven and Jesus you promised that if I would come to you you would give yourself to me and in being united to

Jesus I have his righteousness so you see how faith is not a meritorious thing it's rather declaring there's no merit here that's why I'm looking over there to receiving grace and so it is by faith so that it might be by grace faith alone guarantees that it is by grace alone!

[37:27] glory in such a gospel that takes all the praise away from man and leaves it all at God's feet in Jesus Christ we're dismissed