

## **SOLA: Sola Fide**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sola is our theme for this year's mid-week Advent services. Sola, as the bulletin explains, means only or alone. You are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone, as revealed to us in Scripture alone.

Sola fide, or by faith alone is our theme for this evening.

This has been called the article of Christian doctrine upon which The Church stands or falls. Yes, it is that important. Either you are saved by faith or you are not. And if you are not saved by faith, then you are damned, it is that simple.

This raised the question, what exactly is this faith. Faith is not simply believing in something, or knowing the facts. It is not like saying, "I believe that Vince Lombardi was a real man" or "I believe that when I breath I take oxygen into my body, even though I cannot see it."

I am not saved because of some sort of a feeling in my heart, or some sort of knowledge in my head.

Faith is a trust, a living confidence that is strengthened when a person hears the promises of God and declares, "These are mine! God's Christ did that for me! All that is His is now mine!"

By Faith Alone is vitally important because the option is our own works, based upon the Law. In fact, there are many Christians who believe that it is by works that we are declared righteous in God's sight. There are many who believe that once one declares themselves a Christian, the rest is by their own works.

If it is my works, then what do we do with the words, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."? If it is by works, then the Apostle Paul must not be in heaven, for when he wrote Romans, even as God's chosen apostle to the Gentiles, he was still struggling. Of his works, he said, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

Dear friends, as we prepare to celebrate the first coming of God's Christ, sola fide finds the very reason it is important. It is Christ's work which becomes our fulfillment of the Law.

Hear again our Epistle.

*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.*

*Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.*

God's righteousness is manifested in the Law and prophets, these declare what the Law is and who will fulfill it – Christ! And all those who believe, all those with faith alone in Christ, are justified before God – because Christ's work becomes theirs. All have sinned!

All have failed by their works according to the law. Therefore, it is the perfection of Christ, His work, which becomes the salvation of the believer. It becomes the salvation of the believer for Christ's work is the work of the believer.

Faith says, "What is Christ's is mine!" That is what it means to have faith. If it is by faith alone, it will also point us to, and declare only Christ.

Of course, there are many then who would declare that faith is the work we must accomplish. It is all about Jesus, but it is our job to have faith in Jesus, to trust in Christ – faith is our work that we must accomplish.

Dearly beloved of God, it is fact that even our faith is not our own work. We want to trust self, it is appealing to believe that the work of believing, at least faith, must be our work. But it is not true!

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:8-10)*

Did you hear what it says, Faith is not your own doing, it is a gift of God. It has nothing to do with any work on your part. Why? So that each of us has nothing to boast about! In other words, you can not even boast about your faith! You are God's workmanship. Faith created in you, is Christ in you, and Christ in you does good things.

Faith clings to Christ's work, and thereby, Christ's work becomes ours. Faith attaches Jesus to you.

In our Gospel, the Centurion had faith in Jesus. He did not need Him to come into his home, all he needed was Jesus to say this and he believed it would be done.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved. So, in faith we baptize and faith grants salvation. Whoso ever sins you forgive, they are forgiven. In faith, that word of forgiveness is proclaimed. In faith that word of forgiveness is believed, that Christ has indeed purchased that forgiveness and it was delivered in the word that is heard. Faith clings to that word, and sins are gone.

Faith is eating and drinking. For we eat His Body and drink of His Blood and have forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. To eat and drink is to proclaim what you believe, "I am a sinner. Christ died for me, and His body and blood which were pierced upon the cross are delivered to me in this meal, granting me forgiveness and life."

Dearly beloved of God, this Advent is Sola Fide – for it is by faith alone that you and I can boldly say, "God's Christ has come to purchase my forgiveness! God's Christ comes to me in water, word, and meal to deliver what He purchased to me, so that when He comes again, I may join Him eternally in His kingdom." Amen.