Reformation Sunday
The Glory and Beauty of Sola Fide
By Pastor Jody May 10/25/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

Galatians 2:15-16ESV

Justified by Faith
15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is **not justified by works** of the law but **through faith** in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be **justified by faith** in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be **justified**.

Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People – "Thanks be to God."

Prayer

Introduction/Review

Well, we are taking a one-week hiatus from James, *Faith that Works*, to talk about where does that faith come from? In order to have a faith that is not dead, a True Faith that is obedient to God and of Service to Man, you must first receive it. Last week we brought up the distinction between a faith that justifies and works that justify the faith. If you remember James was NOT talking about being saved or justified by one's works but that when saved your works will validate your faith. As we were reminded by Paul.

Ephesians 2:8-10
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **GOOD WORKS**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We said James and Paul agree because Christ was the one that set that doctrine in motion through His teaching.

John 5:24 ESV

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and **believes** him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

So, this week in honor of Reformation Sunday let's discuss how does one come to receive a true and living faith!

SOLA FIDE, by Faith Alone are we saved. It is a simple answer for Salvation but without God it is an impossible task. It's easy to say, but impossible to accept without God's grace. **This doctrine/teaching is what separates Christianity from every other religion. All other religions teach about what you must accomplish in order to save oneself, whatever that Salvation looks like.**

Well, your question may be, **"Why do I need to be saved, from what?"**

Exodus 34:6-7 ESV
"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **but who will by no means clear the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

There is a need to be saved because scripture explains that God will by no means, **clear the guilty**. There is no way possible for God who is perfectly just to clear guilt. Guilt is a **byproduct/fruit** of sin that was done. So, guilt is a present tense state from a past action meaning you did **something wrong**. God cannot clear the record of sin for if He did it would negate His perfect attribute of Justice and Holiness. He would cease to be fair, making Him like everyone else, He ceases to be God.

Illustration

"What makes you think I have guilt PJ?" Because we can witness in our culture the number one way to sway you on making any kind of decision is to play on your sense of guilt. To appeal to your desire to do something to save yourself, or to add to your merit or standing.

- If you don't vote this way, it is the end of democracy.
- If you don't give to this charity this person will starve, this dog will be left in the cold, this rainforest will be destroyed eradicating this species x,y,z.
- If you don't stop burning fossil fuels, you'll destroy our climate.
- If you don't vote *against* Data centers, you don't care about your neighbors.
- If you don't vote *for* Data centers, then you don't care about China's influence and communism takeover.
- If you don't take serious global warming, you hate your grandkids leaving them with your disastrous choices.
- If you don't get your kids vaccinated, you may contribute to the downfall of society throwing us into WWZ.
- If you don't put your kids in public school your probably racist, but if you do put them in public school, you're an uncaring & negligent parent.
- If you don't go to college, you will probably not amount to much OR if you go to college, you're just wasting money and contributing to the agenda of radical liberalism or Woke V.2.

Our culture knows you are guilty; do you know you are guilty? You see, culture plays off your guilty feelings trying to manipulate your behavior. BTW if you have no *sense of guilt* then you are pathological and suffer from social maladaptive behavior and you need to run, not walk, to the nearest Biblical counselor. The truth those examples show is that **we all have sin in our lives** of which we are guilty for:

Psalm 51:5 ESV
Behold, I was brought forth in **iniquity**, and **in sin** did my mother **conceive** me.

We were brought forth already in promise of punishment for sin - guilty.

Psalm 58:3 ESV
The wicked are **estranged** from the **womb**; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

That sin that we are born with births guilt in us and guilt grows the more we sin, and then culture picks up on that feeling and uses what you already have (**a guilty conscience**) to **manipulate** you to do what they want you to do. And

because you have guilt it produces a desire to do something - **save yourself**! You desire release, you know if you could but get that monkey off your back many things in your life would change **(example of my brother).**

This reality though sets up our culture for the ultimate question pretty well, **"What must you do to be saved?"** Fortunately for us, that is exactly what the Bible answers. (Story of the Philippian Jailer)

Acts 16:30-31 ESV
Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **31** And they said, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

You believe, (πιστεύω (*pisteuō*). vb. **to believe, trust; entrust**[1] **in something already shown to be reliable)** that is you have **Faith** '**IN'** the Lord Jesus alone to **take guilt** and deliver you into eternal life, living right now without fear (same word Jesus used in John 5:24)! The Jailer here in Acts 16 was struck with the enormous amount of guilt that he had jailed and would even help in the execution of Paul and Silas. He had been ready to kill himself in fear that they had escaped and now he sees that they cared enough for him that they gave up their location so he would not harm himself. It was a sacrifice of their freedom for his life. The jailer knows in an instant he must be saved, and the answer came in the blink of an eye. BELIEVE!

The release of guilt for this man, led him to take Paul and Silas to his house where his whole home was converted and baptized. **Faith IS the release of GUILT**. Something happens when someone believes…

Faith (receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness) is the only means by which we can receive justification (a right standing before God). Calvin noted that if we remove the knowledge of this doctrine that, *"The glory of Christ is extinguished, religion is abolished, the church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown."*[2] – **John Calvin**

MP

[1] Fenlason, A. C. (2014). Belief. D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

[2] Henry Beveridge, ed., *John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, Volume I, 1844.

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JUSTIFICATION by **FAITH ALONE**
means
You BELIEVE - He took your sin, and you received His righteousness.
No need for additional Penance!

We will break down this topic on this very special day, 1st by talking of the True Need to be Justified. 2nd Faith – and its' delivery of Justification. 3rd the glorious beauty of how Justification works!

1. The True Need of being Justified!

Exodus 23:7
"Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will **not acquit the wicked**."

Acquit - tsadak *(sawdak) to declare not guilty as in a court of law.*
- Grace is not acquittal for God can't do that. -

There is a need to be justified. (*Illustration* - my experience with the court system when I was 19). I was justified by the court, my guilt was removed, and I believed what the judge told me, not guilty!

Our whole legal system is built around the pursuit of Justice because Justice is a universal desire and need. The whole reason that there is a story after Genesis 3 going all the way to Revelation is built on an unchanging characteristic of God' JUSTICE. **Our God is a just God from which no one can run!** In Deuteronomy 32:4, Moses speaks this reminder to his people:

Deuteronomy 32:4 ESV
The Rock, his work is perfect,
for all his ways are **justice**.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
just and upright is He.

All of God's ways are perfect, and everything He does is just/fair. And because we are born sinners, because we choose sin, and because we have not the power to stop sinning, it invokes God to take action, for with

perfection comes Perfect Justice. That brings us to this conclusion this morning as I had in that court room powerless to gain it, I needed to be made right with the law, I needed to be justified.

[WHAT IS JUSTIFICAITON]

The Baptist Catechism
***Question 37:* What is justification?**
***Answer*:** Justification is an act of God's free grace, by which he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.
Scripture: Romans 3:24; 5:19; Ephesians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Galatians 2:16.

Justification is a pardon in form of <u>A DECREE</u>, a release from sins and all the effects and ALL future grievances based on the grace of a judge.
Leaving the courtroom as if it never happened.



The desire for pardon is what got **Luther fixated** on the scripture; this is what drove him crazy! **Is that what drives us CRAZY?!** And God uses that feeling of desiring a pardon to drive us to the Word too.

Luther battled with a false doctrine (Catholic). Luther was taught that God called him into the Kingdom by infant baptism BUT it was up to Luther to keep in the good graces of God making sure he observed all the sacraments AND that he contributed to His Grace. **He was taught that to keep His Salvation he must add to his merit, his worth! It drove him crazy BECAUSE he could not do anything with his guilt.**

[LUTHER]
- November 1510 Luther travels to Rome; 5 years into his monk journey.

- Viewed all the holy relics to increase his merit; add to grace (reminds me a lot of household idols)
- Went to mass all the time in the Holy City repeating the "Pater Noster" the Lord's Prayer constantly
- Crawled on his hands and knees up the steps of the "*Scala Sancta*" (Pilate's Palace) while saying the Lord's Prayer on every step and upon reaching the top says, "Who knows whether it is so?" **AM I JUSTIFIED YET!?**
- In 1511 he's transferred to Wittenberg, Germany to a monastery where he would spend up to 6 hours a day in confession.
- Next, He began to study the German mystics that taught the practice of pacifist living (total surrender of self to the world).
- It all drove him deeper into depression and upon reflection said, *"I myself more than once driven to the very abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created. Love God? I hated Him!"* - **Luther**

Again, it wasn't until God broke through Luther's Rebellious heart, through Scripture, that Luther saw how a man was to be justified, to find release, to find pardon!

Romans 1:17 ESV
"For in it (Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written. 'The righteous shall live by faith'."

So, what happened when Luther read Romans 1:17? What ignited empty and meaningless ink on pages to become the roaring fires of Luther's heart that propelled him to bring the light of the Gospel to a world lost in religion? Luther discovered the way to be Justified, to have release, to get the monkey off his back, to be free!

2. Faith - it delivers Justification!

Gal. 2:15-16 ESV
15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is **not justified by works** of the law but **through faith** in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be **justified by faith** in Christ and **not by works of the law**, because by works of the law no one will be **justified**.

Let's take into serious consideration that for a Jew (Paul) and the Jewish converts he was writing here to abandon the Law was a big thing! **It's turning their back on what they thought could always save them!** But what Paul and these Galatians learned, and had to be continually reminded, was that the law cannot save you.

Here's why they left Judaism - Law was given to root out a problem but it cannot save you. Works cannot save you, they cannot JUSTIFY YOU. But the need for Justification continues!

Law is like our tax code. You are born and soon you must work, and you will constantly owe the state and it is not until you are dead can you stop owing. It will never matter how much you make, you can't out give the tax code for the code demands that you always pay. **As a matter of fact, the more you pay and contribute to your country the more you owe according to the code.** Our tax code, as silly as it sounds, mirrors God's law. You can't ever outgive the tax code!

God's law holds no exemptions for those it covers. The only way to escape the penalty of law is abandon trying to be justified by it. **We have to leave the system in which we were born like the Galatians! – Here's How:**

[JESUS]

Romans 3:22-25 ESV
"[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**..."

Forgiveness of our sins; *the conscious choices we make to be a part of this world*, **that which brings us GUILT,** are justified by the action of redemption, **that's a one-time payment,** and we are bought out of this world. If you could use again the example of a tax code, we receive a tax exemption status that can never be lost.

Most Christians know this part of the story, the cross, the sacrifice, is what buys us back. We have traded citizenship with the world and have moved on to God's Kingdom, where there are no more tax codes.

But being Justified here is a two-step process there is a redemption to be made and there is a call for a substitution.

The Father puts forward Jesus – propitiation - in our place - so that His life would cover the need for any penalties owed **and when placed forward Jesus not only sacrifices His life but gives us His right standing with God.**

Now for many of us in here, and you may even be ex-Catholic, in your evangelical upbringing there is a good chance you did not learn this well. Because again it is easy to say but it is hard to accept. We like Luther want to believe that if we can make ourselves miserable enough, we might earn God's grace. **We were bought with a price and if we really loved Jesus then we would try hard to earn that love. But that's not the Gospel**, that is not faith alone, that is the curse that Luther was under.

Our fight for Faith is to fight the belief that we have to earn being saved/loved!? **Romans 3 said all I have to do is believe it**! By faith alone means, that I receive it BUT I need to receive the whole thing. Some of us in here right now for what I am about to say have never heard this next part before.

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

Jesus in being our propitiation (Romans 3:25)-in our place- upon offering Himself **not only** takes our sin on Himself but gives us here according to 2 Corinthians His RIGHTEOUSNESS. **This is what Luther called the Great Exchange, in the theological world we call this Imputation.**

MP again:

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3. The Glorious Beauty of how Justification works!

The Gospel is then, when we believe by Faith, that my standing with God can never change!

It means, **WE CANNOT BE ACCUSED ANYMORE**, even if my morality is not perfected yet.

It means when I pray and confess my sins, we can admit our wrongs to God and each other and **plead Jesus' merits** not our own, and **IT SHALL BE ACCEPTED**.

We grow in holiness and goodness every day because of who we have been made into, ALL **not by guilt!** Guilt has always been used by the church for behavior control just as much as the culture (as in our guilty beliefs in the beginning), it is our go to whipping post for our people. **What would happen in this church if we all believed we are righteous!?**

Let's clear all this up and be assured as we bring this to an end.

If Justification is a process we drive, then how would we know when we arrived?

If Justification is earned by our hands, then when are we ever sure we have done enough?

If it is a process and if it is earned, then I will continue to suffer in guilt until I think I have reached it.

BUT If Justification is a **Declaration of God**, based on **His Justice & His Righteousness**, then that also means my Right Standing never changes because God is eternal.

SO - Because it was not earned, GUESS WHAT, it can never be unearned!

Romans 8:30 ESV
30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

All of those things, standings, those decrees over us, you and I lack the power to remove for they were not done by us, **they were done by God!**

Christianity, the elect, the covenant community, is the only religion that offers Eternal Security through Justification by Faith, therefore it is the only path that offers true hope!

This is why, it is so important as we have learned from our forefathers **that it is by Faith Alone *'Sola Fide'* that we are justified**, so that no one but God can boast…

Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The glorious beauty of Justification by Faith is that it is NOT EARNED, but it is FREELY GIVEN, not on the basis of your works, **but CHRIST'S**. And because you are not in control of it, once you have it, you can't get rid of it (like type 1 diabetes). There is nothing we can do about our condition of being born in sin and there is nothing we can do about being born again; the Spirit goes where it wants…

[CHALLENGE]

Today we all need to realize we have a need to be justified because we all have the need to be rid of guilt. Perhaps you are fooling yourself with something you do to make you feel like you are ok with God. You give to charity, you pay more than a tithe, you spoil your kids, you mow your neighbors grass, all of these things are good but if you are doing them to justify yourself with God then they are a waste of time. Believe today not in what you can do to make God love you more but believe that God was pleased enough with Jesus to pardon all your sins.

[CALL TO OBEDIENCE]

1. The Mortification of Self-Justifying Works

Father-led households must actively audit their home life and internal motives to ensure that the good works performed—whether they be homeschooling, hospitality, or community involvement—are not being offered as a "payment" to secure God's favor. As the head of the home, a father must explicitly teach his family that our obedience is a fruit of justification, not a root of it. When a family member experiences the sting of guilt or the weight of perceived failure, the immediate response must not be a call to "do more" to regain standing, but a call to turn back to the finished work of Christ. We must explicitly reject any vestige of a performance-based spirituality that mirrors the penance of the Roman system.

2. The Cultivation of Gospel-Rooted Liberty

Having been declared righteous by a divine decree that cannot be rescinded, the believer is called to a life of joyful freedom rather than a life of anxious servitude. Because the conscience is cleared by Christ's sacrifice, we are to reject the world's manipulation through guilt. Whether it is regarding political engagement, medical choices, or the various pressures of modern culture, we are to act not from a place of fearful desperation or "need to save ourselves," but from the settled peace of those who already possess the righteousness of God. This liberty is to be exercised with a thankful heart, prioritizing the duties of our covenant community and the stewardship of our families without the crushing weight of the fear of condemnation.

Lastly, if you have never received your pardon, the decree of not guilty, then as the Jailer in Acts 16 believe that:

MP one more time:

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[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

Matthew 26:26-29 ESV

Institution of the Lord's Supper

26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it
and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took
a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all
of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for
the **forgiveness of sins**. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine
until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Today when we take the bread, we look back and remember over 500 years ago that it used to be given as a symbol of guilt, of what I should have done, and it required me to keep going to the church to save me. Today in light of what we have learned when we partake of the bread, it is to point to the life of Jesus, His earned righteousness, that was then exchanged for our sin. When we partake of it now, it is to remind us once and for all, we no longer have to work to try and earn God's favor, that has been done for us by the Son. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for through Faith in Him alone are we saved.

Today when we take the drink of the cup it is to remember that blood was required for justice, and to bring us into a better covenant with the protector of our souls. Jesus told us His blood was given for the forgiveness of sins. Not only did he impute His righteousness to us, but He removed our sin from us and nailed to the cross the guilt we bear in our hearts. He has removed us from the code of the law, and has placed us in the Covenant of Redemption, forever secured by His eternal decree. Praise be to our eternal mediator who will forever secure our right standing with God.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

*** The Congregation will stand and recites:**
Elder – "Christians, what do you believe?"

LBCF 1689 Chapter 11 Of Justification Paragraph 2 Justification is by Faith Alone.

Faith that receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness is the only means of justification. 6 At the same time, faith is never alone, but is always accompanied by every other saving grace. Faith is never dead, but rather, it works through love. 7

6. Romans 3:28
7. Galatians 5:6, James 2:17, 22, 26

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has decreed His people "NOT GUILTY" and enforces that ruling eternally.

Go in the name of the Son, that receives our sin and gives us His righteousness eternally.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that grants us Faith to believe the Gospel and gives us the power/joy to share that good news with others.

Fellowship Questions on Sola Fide

1. **The Nature of Guilt:** The sermon highlights how the world weaponizes guilt to manipulate our behavior, whereas the Gospel provides the only true release from it. Can you share a time when you felt pressured by cultural expectations or religious performance to 'earn' your standing, and how the doctrine of *Sola Fide* specifically brought peace to your conscience in that moment?

2. **The Great Exchange:** It was discussed the concept of imputation—that Jesus took our sin and we received His righteousness. In our day-to-day lives as husbands, wives, and parents, how does the reality of this 'Great Exchange' change the way we view our failures and successes in our family duties?

3. **Faith vs. Fruit:** Since the LBCF 1689 reminds us that while we are justified by faith alone, that faith is never alone but works through love, how do we practically maintain the distinction between *fruit (our obedience) and the root* (Christ's righteousness) so that we do not slip back into a works-based justification?

4. **The Certainty of Grace:** If our justification is an eternal decree from God rather than a status we maintain by our own efforts, how should this truth alter our response to trials and the fear of condemnation? How does this security empower us to be more courageous in our political and cultural engagement rather than acting out of desperation?