

Saved by Grace

1. Mankind's #1 problem
2. Five solas of the Reformation - a review (or introduction)
3. How are faith and works related?

Mankind's #1 problem

We are sinners, and therefore guilty before God, who is holy, righteous and just, and deserving only of his wrath.

Why does religion exist? To find God, to reach him, to become acceptable to him. For example, the altar "to the unknown god" in Athens. So justification by God is the end goal. What is justification? We'll get to that shortly.

Over many centuries, the RCC convoluted Christianity to the point that it was no longer biblical Christianity. And then the Reformation happened!

Five solas of the Reformation

1. **Sola Scriptura** (by Scripture alone, as opposed to tradition, creeds, confessions, dreams, etc.)
2. **Sola Fide** (by faith alone, i.e. justification is by faith alone, and not by works)
 - a. Justification: legally declared by God to be "not guilty" and "righteous" before him, forever, because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross
 - i. Grudem: Even today, a true view of justification is the dividing line between the biblical gospel of salvation by faith alone and all false gospels of salvation based on good works.
 - b. Luther: "the doctrine by which the church stands or falls"
 - c. Protestantism compared to Catholicism on this issue
 - i. Faith = justification + good works (Protestantism)
 - ii. Faith + good works = justification (Catholicism)
3. **Sola Gratia** (by grace alone, and not by our own merit)
 - a. Grace = unmerited (unearned) favor
4. **Solo Christo** (through Christ alone...no pope, priest, or other mediator is necessary)
5. **Soli Deo Gloria** (glory to God alone)
6. Does Grace Fellowship hold to the five solas of the Reformation?
 - a. See the printout of our Articles of Faith
7. A summary by John Piper:
 - a. "In an age of corruption and false teaching, the Protestant Reformers returned to the Scriptures. There they found the way of salvation. Instead of indulgences, the Mass, relics, and other superstitions, they rediscovered the ancient way of salvation: the gospel.

The five solas were their attempt to summarize biblical teaching on salvation. That God makes us alive and is completely for us: By God's grace alone, on the basis of Christ alone, received through faith alone, to the glory of God alone, with Scripture alone as the only, final, decisive, authority on truth.

The reception of these truths — if found in the Bible — is not about what some people thought 500 years ago. It's about how we can experience everlasting judgment or joy forever."

How are faith and works related? Do Paul and James agree or disagree?

1. Ephesians 2:1-10
2. Titus 3:3-7, 8, 14
3. Colossians 2:11-15
4. Galatians 2:16
5. James 2:14-26
 - a. Taken alone, 2:24 *could* be seen as contradicting Paul, which the RCC has done
 - b. James and faith - overall context
 - i. 1:2-3 - "life is an arena in which faith faces the test of experience"
 - ii. 2:1 - faith is the common characteristic of Christians (Gal 3:26)
 - iii. 2:5 - "faith is God's foundational gift" (Eph. 2:8)
 - iv. 2:17 - true faith has (possesses) works
 - v. 2:20 - faith is central, and has works attached to it
 - vi. 2:22 - faith "is the continuing reality, running like a story-line through all the experiences of the Christian life" (1 Tim 6:12)
 - vii. 5:15 - "teaches us about the prayer which proceeds from faith"
 - c. 2:14-26's connections with the previous passage, 2:1-13
 - i. In 2:13 mercy is essential to the Christian life, and in 2:14-16 mercy is an essential product of faith
 - ii. In 2:1 "faith is the common characteristic of all Christians," and 2:14 raises "the question of what faith is"
 - iii. 2:8-13 "introduced and laid heavy stress on the place of [the royal] law in the experience of the Christian." So how can this "possibly match a Christian understanding of salvation by faith?"
 - iv. In 2:12-13 we see "the topic of judgment to come." What "is a Christian's ultimate security in the day of judgment?" Our faith in Jesus Christ, proven by being listed in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 20:12-15). "How very important, then, it is to know what a true and saving faith is!"
 - d. In 2:14-26 James introduces four illustrations to help us understand what true faith is.
 - i. 15-17 - mercy shown to a poorly clothed and hungry brother or sister Christian

- ii. 18-20 - believing but troubled demons
- iii. 21-24 - Abraham, our father in the faith who was called a friend of God
- iv. 25-26 - Rahab, a non-Israelite prostitute who showed kindness to Joshua's spies at great risk to herself and her family
- e. Three things to notice about these illustrations
 - i. First, James gives a summary statement of each illustration, in 2:17, 20, 24, 26
 - ii. Second, the first two are negative - what faith is not (armchair philanthropists and demons), and the second two are positive - what faith is (Abraham, a major Bible figure and Rahab, a very minor Bible figure)
 - iii. Third, the first and last show manward evidence of true faith - hungry people fed and clothed, spies in danger received and protected, and the second and third show God-ward evidence of true faith - peace with God - not terror (shuddering), and a life of complete obedience to God's will, holding nothing back
- f. So what is true faith, and what is the life of faith?
 - i. "The life which respects the glory of Jesus (2:1)...it is the life of obedience in particular to the royal law (2:8) - our obedience to the word of God seen in our concern for the needs of man. The life of faith is more than a private (and long past) transaction of the heart with God. It is the life of active consecration seen in the obedience which holds nothing back from God, and the concern which holds nothing back from human need." J. A. Motyer
- g. So does James contradict Paul, and simply state that we are justified by works in 2:24? He does if we pull his statement kicking and screaming out of its context. But taken with the overall context, no, he does not.
 - i. What else is true here? Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, so if it appears to do so, the problem lies with us and not with Scripture.
- 6. So how are faith and works related?
 - a. We are justified before God by our faith alone, in Christ alone, but true faith is never alone, and will be, must be, demonstrated by good works.

Resources

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_solae
2. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/soli-deo-gloria/excerpts/you-owe-everything-to-grace>
3. <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/what-are-the-five-solas>