

Lion and Lamb Apologetics' Here I Stand: The Foundation of Gospel Truth

ROBB BRUNANSKY, PHD

1



The Reformation is, without dispute, one of the greatest events to take place in church history.

Our world had been shrouded in the darkness of Roman Catholicism for nearly a thousand years, with little access to the Word of God and an increasingly perverted “gospel” being proclaimed. Along came a monk named Martin Luther, who was troubled in his soul because he knew that he was unrighteous and that he would be judged by a righteous God after he died. One day, while studying the book of Romans, Luther came to understand what the New Testament meant by ‘justification by faith,’ realizing the righteousness of God is freely given to those who have faith in Christ.

As the Reformation continued, the primary issue with which it was concerned was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Reformers looked to Scripture to answer the question, “What is the Gospel?” The Gospel message, which united the Reformers, was summarized under five terms, which came to be known as the five *solas* of the Reformation.

WWW.LIONANDLAMBAPOLOGETICS.ORG

© 2023, LION AND LAMB APOLOGETICS—1305 CHESTER ST—CLEBURNE, TX 76033

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

The word 'sola' is Latin, meaning 'only' or 'alone.' It is this particular term that sets Protestant, Evangelical theology apart from that of the Roman Catholic Church; it sets apart false gospels from the biblical gospel message. So, what is this Gospel message, recovered from the Word of God by the Reformers, and entrusted to us today? To answer that question, let's consider these five statements of the Reformation to give us a clearer grasp of this glorious gospel we have believed and to strengthen our conviction in the biblical truthfulness of it.

2

The first is *Sola Fide*, or Faith Alone.

This phrase is the primary principle of the Reformation as it pertains to the Gospel, meaning that a person is justified before God through faith alone – and not on the basis of any works he or she has done. To be justified does not mean to be *made* righteous, but to be *declared* righteous. The idea of justification by faith alone means that God declared us to be righteous according to His law – not because we have kept the law, but only through faith in Christ.

Many Christians are beset with anxiety, fear, worry, doubt, uncertainty, and guilt because they have never really come to a clear understanding of this one, central doctrine of Christianity: Justification by faith alone, apart from works. They continue to look to their works, trying to find assurance of their salvation in the flesh rather than trusting in Christ and relying on the Spirit. This can become paralyzing. However, we need this truth for our salvation and sanctification. We are justified through one thing only: faith in Jesus Christ.

The second is *Sola Gratia*, or Grace Alone.

We might think to ourselves, as we hear that we are justified by faith alone: "Wait a minute! But I'm not worthy of being declared righteous simply by believing in Jesus when the reality is that I am incredibly unrighteous!" This is where *grace alone* applies. God declares us righteous, even though we don't deserve it, and the basis of that declaration is His own goodness and love, not our worthiness. In other words, God decides to justify us because He wants to show us favor – and that's it. Justification is free, and it flows from the grace of God to the unworthy, the ungodly, and the unwilling.

When I truly understood the grace of God, as have many Christians throughout history, it was like a wave of comfort rolling over my soul. There is great peace in this knowledge of God's grace. How could I rest in Christ if I was terrified that I might do something to lose God's favor? How could I know lasting peace and have assurance if I thought the only reason God saved me was because I did something to catch His attention, or because I had done something worthy to deserve it? I couldn't! The truth is that God saved us

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

because He did something, and we are the unworthy recipients of infinite love – love we never could deserve though we were to receive 10,000 lifetimes to earn it.

The third is *Solus Christus*, or Christ Alone.

How can God declare me to be righteous when I am not righteous? How can He give me this gift of righteousness simply because He decided to, apart from my worthiness or merit? The answer is in *Jesus Christ alone*. When we say *Christ alone*, we indicate that God justifies us by grace alone through faith alone based on the merit of Christ alone. God declares us righteous on the basis of the real righteousness of Jesus, which was performed in His life and death for us, not just a figment of God's divine imagination.

Believers should consider what Christ has done for us. Our standing before God does not depend on one single work we perform, but only on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is perfect and outside of us. We cannot defile our Savior's righteousness, and we cannot corrupt His holiness. We have been saved, not based on our works or because we had merited it or because our righteousness meets God's inflexible law. We have been saved through faith in Christ by the grace of God on the merit of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Not even our faith is our righteousness before God; only Jesus' righteousness, which we receive by faith, grants us righteousness before God. His righteousness is our comfort, not our own.

The fourth is *Sola Scriptura*, or Scripture Alone.

As wonderful as the first three *Solas* are, they are utterly meaningless if they are the product of 16th Century theologians and not the Word of God. This principle, then, asserts that the Word of God is the final authority in all matters to which it speaks. Scripture has no peer, equal, or rival. Reason, science, history, archaeology, religion, and philosophy all are subservient to the Word of God, which stands above all popes, councils, bishops, pastors, creeds, and confessions.

In Luther's era, when the pope wielded so much authority, we do well to remember his words at the Diet of Worms: "I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures." That is what we mean by *Scripture alone*. Our hearts and minds are entirely conquered by God's Word. For all we might esteem various teachers and pastors, for all we might have been helped by various books and sermons, for all we might appreciate religious emotions and experiences – one thing holds our minds, hearts, and consciences captive: the Scriptures alone.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The fifth is *Soli Deo Gloria*, or Glory to God Alone.

The Roman Catholic Church of course believed in the glory of God. However, Catholics added *works and merit* to salvation, and *works and decisions of man* to the Bible, thus beginning to steal a little of God's glory for themselves. The Reformers argued that God gets all the glory for our salvation, and we get none of it. If our salvation comes to us through faith and not works, by grace and not merit, on the grounds of Christ's obedience and not ours, where is boasting? Where do we get any glory? How can we claim anything? We cannot!

We cannot boast in any way about our salvation. We cannot take any credit. We cannot receive any glory for it. We cannot claim anything we did contributed to it. Salvation is all of God and Christ. For the sincere Christian, nothing is sweeter than to accord God all the glory for our salvation. We know in our hearts how worthy He is to receive glory, honor, power, and dominion, and we want to steal none of it from Him.

With Luther today, we also must declare, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me!" as we stand on the truth of the Gospel: Justified through faith alone by God's grace alone on the merit of Christ alone, conquered by Scripture alone, and all for God's glory alone.



Robb Brunansky

Robb pastors Desert Hills Bible Church in Glendale, Arizona. He has his M. Div. from The Master's Seminary and his Ph.D. in New Testament from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

© The CrippleGate, October 30, 2023. Retrieved October 30, 2023.

<https://thecripplegate.com/here-i-stand-the-foundation-of-gospel-truth/>

NOTE: This post is in compliance with the Fair Use clause of the US Copyright Act of 1976 (17 U.S. Code § 107). The US Supreme Court has issued several major decisions clarifying and reaffirming the fair use doctrine since the 1980s, most recently in the 2021 decision *Google LLC v. Oracle America, Inc.*