

S T U D Y G U I D E



God Alone

T H E S O U R C E O F O U R F A I T H

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Sola Fide

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The argument that justification is sola fide, or by faith alone, was a central issue in the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church asserted that justification is by faith with the addition of works. The Reformers argued that man's justification is by faith alone with the addition of no works or merit by man. The growth of subjective doctrine and relativism reveals the importance of defining a true doctrine of man's justification today. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses sola fide.

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the five solas of the Protestant Reformation.
2. To emphasize the significance of the debate over justification in the sixteenth century.
3. To define the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification.

QUOTATION

“When Abraham shall rise again, at the last day, then he will chide us for our unbelief, and will say: I had not the hundredth part of the promises which ye have, and yet I believed. That example of Abraham exceeds all human natural reason, who, overcoming the paternal love he bore towards his only son Isaac, was all obedient to God, and, against the law of nature, would have sacrificed that son. What, for the space of three days, he felt in his breast, how his heart yearned and panted, what hesitations and trials he had, cannot be expressed.”

—Martin Luther

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The five solas were rallying points of the Protestant Reformation.
 1. Sola Fide = Faith Alone
 2. Sola Gratia = Grace Alone
 3. Solus Christus = Christ Alone
 4. Sola Scriptura = Scripture Alone
 5. Soli Deo Gloria = Glory to God Alone
- B. The Protestant assertion that salvation is sola fide or through faith alone was a central issue in the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation.
 - The Protestant Reformers argued that man's justification is by faith alone with the addition of no works or merit by man.
- C. The debate over man's justification before God was a significant issue in the sixteenth century.
 - The question of man's justification receives less attention today because of the dominance of relativism.
- D. The biblical truth of man's condemnation outside of God's justification needs to be preached and taught in the modern church.
 - Many in the church do not truly believe in the doctrine of justification by faith alone and therefore do not emphasize it.
- E. The Gospel's emphasis on the deliverance of man from God's wrath has been forgotten in many Christian circles.
 1. The Gospel does not simply deliver us from bad habits, addictions, social failure, psychological deficiency, and broken relationships.
 2. The central focus of the Gospel is delivering sinners from the judgment of God.
- F. The Roman Catholic Church historically has argued that justification is through faith, grace, and Christ, but not through these avenues alone.
 1. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that faith is the initiation, foundation, and root of justification.
 2. The Church teaches that grace is necessary for justification.
 3. The Church also affirms the atonement of Christ as necessary for man's justification.
- G. The Roman Catholic Church does not believe that justification is by faith alone, grace alone, or Christ alone.
 1. The Roman Church teaches that justification is through faith plus our works, grace plus our merit, and Christ plus ourselves that brings us justification.
 2. The Reformers rejected the idea that man can perform good works, produce merit, or exhibit the personal righteousness necessary for salvation.
- H. The Roman Catholic Church views baptism as the "instrumental cause" or method of justification.
 1. The Church believes that upon baptism people receive an infusion of grace.

2. A baptized member of the church is justified if he assents to the infusion of grace and he does not commit a mortal sin.
 3. The sacrament of penance brings forgiveness in the event of a mortal sin.
 4. Justification is acquired in the Roman Catholic Church through the instruments of the sacraments.
- I. The Reformers argued that the instrumental cause of justification is not through any sacrament or work, but rather through faith in Christ alone.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Protestant assertion that salvation is _____ or through faith alone was a central issue in the Protestant Reformation.
 - a. Sola Fide
 - b. Sola Gratia
 - c. Solus Christus
 - d. Sola Scriptura
2. The debate over man's justification before God was a significant issue in the _____ century.
 - a. fourteenth
 - b. fifteenth
 - c. sixteenth
 - d. seventeenth
3. The question of man's justification receives less attention today because of the dominance of _____.
 - a. relativism
 - b. Orthodoxy
 - c. Catholicism
 - d. Protestantism
4. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that _____ is the initiation, foundation, and root of justification.
 - a. grace
 - b. faith
 - c. baptism
 - d. penance
5. The Roman Catholic Church views _____ as the "instrumental cause" or method of justification.
 - a. penance
 - b. baptism
 - c. the Lord's Supper
 - d. extreme unction

6. The _____ rejected the idea that man can perform good works, produce merit, or exhibit the personal righteousness necessary for salvation.
 - a. Roman Catholics
 - b. Orthodox Christians
 - c. Reformers
 - d. humanists

7. The Church believes that upon baptism people receive an infusion of _____.
 - a. grace
 - b. works
 - c. perfection
 - d. prayer

8. The Reformers argued that the instrumental cause of justification is not through any sacrament or work, but rather through _____.
 - a. faith alone
 - b. baptism
 - c. the last rites
 - d. the Church

BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the command God gives Abram at the beginning of Genesis 12? Why would this be a particularly challenging command for Abram's time and culture?
2. What role will God play in blessing Abram? What is Abram's role?
3. What is Abram's reaction to God's command? Do you think Abram's actions were difficult?
4. What does Abram do every time he moves to a new location? What do you believe is the significance of this practice?
5. What was Abram's fear as he and his wife entered Egypt? How does he take his circumstances into his own hands and fail to trust God?
6. What are the two sides of Abram's character revealed in this chapter? How can you relate or not relate to Abram?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What significant test of faith has God allowed you to experience? What was your reaction to this experience?

2. How is God currently calling you to faith and obedience even though the road ahead is obscured? What does your faith look like amidst what seems to be senseless suffering and disappointment?
3. Do you have the faith to believe that where you are today is exactly where God wants you? How does the life of Abraham discourage you away from manipulation and encourage you towards a life of trust?
4. What role does faith play in listening to the voice of God? How does what we believe about God affect how we listen to Him?
5. What are the truths you know in your head, but yet are very difficult to believe in your heart?

APPLICATION

1. Ask the Lord to give you the faith you need to follow Him in obedience regardless of your current circumstances.
2. Consider how you are tempted to replace your faith with the thinking of this world.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Sproul, R.C. *Faith Alone*

Kistler, Don, ed. *Justification by Faith Alone*

Buchanan, James *The Doctrine of Justification*

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the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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