

## Introduction

Selected from the writings of Martin Luther \*

"This doctrine [justification by faith] is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour.... For no one who does not hold this article – or, to use Paul's expression, this 'sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1) – is able to teach aright in the church or successfully to resist any adversary . . . this is the heel of the Seed that opposes the old serpent and crushes its head. That is why Satan, in turn, cannot but persecute it."

"Whoever departs from the article of justification does not know God and is an idolater . . . For when this article has been taken away, nothing remains but error, hypocrisy, godlessness, and idolatry, although it may seem to be the height of truth, worship of God, holiness, etc."

"If the article of justification is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time. And all the people in the world who do not hold to this justification are either Jews or Turks or papists or heretics; for there is no middle ground between these two righteousness: the active one of the Law and the passive one which comes from Christ. Therefore the man who strays from Christian righteousness must relapse into the active one, that is, since he has lost Christ, he must put his confidence in his own works."

"When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen. Therefore it is necessary constantly to inculcate and impress it, as Moses says of his Law (Deut. 6:7); for it cannot be inculcated and urged enough or too much. Indeed, even though we learn it well and hold to it, yet there is no one who apprehends it perfectly or believes it with a full affection and heart. So very trickish is our flesh, fighting as it does against the obedience of the spirit."

"The article of justification and of grace is the most delightful, and it alone makes a person a theologian and makes of a theologian a judge of the earth and of all affairs. Few there are, however, who have thought it through well and who teach it aright."

"Of this article [justification] nothing may be yielded or conceded, though heaven and earth and whatever will not abide, fall to ruin; for 'there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' says St. Peter (Acts 4:12); 'and with His stripes we are healed' (Is. 53:5). And on this article all that we teach and practice is based, against the pope, the devil, and the world. That is why we must be very certain of this doctrine and not doubt; otherwise all is lost, and the pope and the devil and all things gain the victory over us and are adjudged right."

"The article of justification must be learned diligently. It alone can support us in the face of these countless offenses and can console us in all temptations and persecutions. For we see that it cannot be otherwise: the world is bound to be offended at the doctrine of godliness and to cry out constantly that nothing good comes of it, since 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.' "

"In short, if this article concerning Christ — the doctrine that we are justified and saved through Him alone and consider all apart from Him damned — is not professed, all resistance and restraint are at an end. Then there is, in fact, neither measure nor limit to any heresy and error."

"There is this about the article of grace that if one diligently and sincerely remains loyal to it, it keeps one from falling into heresy and from undertaking anything against Christ or His Christendom. For with it comes the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the heart by it and keeps it in the true, certain understanding, so that it is able precisely and plainly to distinguish and judge all the other articles of faith and forcefully to sustain and defend them."

"The papacy is shaken and shattered nowadays, not through these tumults of the sectaries but through the preaching of the article of justification, which has not only weakened the kingdom of Antichrist but has also till now sustained and defended us against its power."

\* Selected from *What Luther Says*, an anthology compiled by Edwald M. Plass, Vol.2, pp.702-704, 715-718.

The "Material Principle" of the Reformation was justification by faith alone. As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." The Genevan Confession likewise pointed out the necessity of those justified living by faith saying, "We confess that the entrance which we have to the great treasures and riches of the goodness of God that is vouchsafed us is by faith; inasmuch as, in certain confidence and assurance of heart, we believe in the promises of the gospel, and receive Jesus Christ as he is offered to us by the Father and described to us by the Word of God (Genevan 11).

- I. **Sola Scriptura: Our Only Manuel**
- II. **Solus Christus: Our Only Method**
- III. **Sola Gratia: Our Only Method**
- IV. **Sola Fide: Our Only Means**
- V. **Soli Deo Gloria: Our Only Motivation**

## VI. **Sola Fide: Our Only Means**

### **Sola Fide:** The Erosion of The Chief Article

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. This is the article by which the church stands or falls. Today this article is often ignored, distorted or sometimes even denied by leaders, scholars and pastors who claim to be evangelical. Although fallen human nature has always recoiled from recognizing its need for Christ's imputed righteousness, modernity greatly fuels the fires of this discontent with the biblical Gospel. We have allowed this discontent to dictate the nature of our ministry and what it is we are preaching.

Many in the church growth movement believe that sociological understanding of those in the pew is as important to the success of the gospel as is the biblical truth which is proclaimed. As a result, theological convictions are frequently divorced from the work of the ministry. The marketing orientation in many churches takes this even further, erasing the distinction between the biblical Word and the world, robbing Christ's cross of its offense, and reducing Christian faith to the principles and methods which bring success to secular corporations. While the theology of the cross may be believed, these movements are actually emptying it of its meaning. There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to him our sin and imputed to us his

righteousness. Because he bore our judgment, we now walk in his grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach him.

**John 3:36** He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

**Gal 3:11** But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for *“the just shall live by faith.”*

**Heb 10:38**

*Now the just shall live by faith;  
But if anyone draws back,  
My soul has no pleasure in him.”*

<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

**Heb 11:6**

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

**John 3:14**

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**John 5:24**

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

**John 6:40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

**Acts 13:39** and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

**Acts 15:7-11**

And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, <sup>9</sup> and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

**Acts 16:31**

So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

**Romans 4:5**

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

**Romans 10:9-11**

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth

confession is made unto salvation. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, *“Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”*

*Gal 3;22*

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us to Christ*, that we might be justified by faith.

*Phil 3:3-9*

*James 2:14-26*

### **Thesis Four: Sola Fide**

We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

## VII. Soli Deo Gloria: Our Only Motivation

Soli Deo Gloria: The Erosion of God-Centered Worship

Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing his work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.

God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship; we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success.

### Psm 29:1-2

Give <sup>a</sup>unto the Lord, O you mighty ones,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.



- 2 Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name;  
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Psm 96:7

Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
Give to the Lord glory and strength.

Psm 115:1

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth.

Eph 3:21

to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations,  
forever and ever. Amen.

I Tim 1:17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise,  
*be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

II Tim 4:18

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for  
His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever.

Rev 5:12

saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and  
under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I  
heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power

*Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

<sup>14</sup> Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

### Rev. 19:1-7a

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God! <sup>2</sup> For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her." <sup>3</sup> Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" <sup>5</sup> Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

<sup>6</sup> And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! <sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory,

### Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

<sup>34</sup> *"For who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has become His counselor?"*

<sup>35</sup> *"Or who has first given to Him  
And it shall be repaid to him?"*

<sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

### Ephesians 1: 3-12

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **good pleasure of His will**, <sup>6</sup> **to the praise of the glory of His grace**, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

<sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, <sup>9</sup> having made known to us the mystery of His will, **according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself**, <sup>10</sup> that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. <sup>11</sup> In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the **purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**, <sup>12</sup> that we who first trusted in Christ **should be to the praise of His glory**.

### Romans 9:22

What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> **and that He might make known** the riches of **His glory** on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

### **Thesis Five: Soli Deo Gloria**

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect

either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self- fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

The Reformation reclaimed the Scriptural teaching of the sovereignty of God over every aspect of the believer's life. All of life is to be lived to the glory of God. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." This great and all consuming purpose was emphasized by those in the 16th and 17th Centuries who sought to reform the church according to the Word of God. In contrast to the monastic division of life into sacred versus secular perpetuated by Roman Church, the reformers saw **all of life** to be lived under the Lordship of Christ. Every activity of the Christian is to be sanctified unto the glory of God.

### **Call To Repentance And Reformation**

The faithfulness of the evangelical church in the past contrasts sharply with its unfaithfulness in the present. Earlier in this century, evangelical churches sustained a remarkable missionary endeavor, and built many religious institutions to serve the cause of biblical truth and Christ's kingdom. That was a time when Christian behavior and expectations were markedly different from those in the culture. Today they often are not. The evangelical world today is losing its biblical fidelity, moral compass and missionary zeal.

**We repent of our worldliness.** We have been influenced by the "gospels" of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure adequately to tell others about God's saving work in Jesus Christ.

***We also earnestly call back erring professing evangelicals who have deviated from God's Word in the matters discussed in this Declaration. This includes those who declare that there is hope of eternal life apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, who claim that those who reject Christ in this life will be annihilated rather than endure the just judgment of God through eternal suffering, or who***

***claim that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are one in Jesus Christ even where the biblical doctrine of justification is not believed.***