

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. We are currently looking at the 5 solas of the Reformation.
2. Last time we looked at sola Scriptura and we said that Sola Scriptura says the Bible alone is our highest authority.
3. It is the final word because it is God's Word.
4. God's authority becomes obvious and unquestionable when one considers three facts.

5. First, God created the heavens, the earth, and all that exists therein (Genesis 1-2).
6. Second, God owns the earth, all it contains, and those who dwell on it (Ps.24:1).
7. Third, in the end God will consume it all, just as He declared, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Pet.3:10).
8. To understand and accept God’s authority is as simple as accepting the fact of God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine, p.101.

9. Romans 13:1 (NKJV) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
10. This verse lays out clearly God's authority and His divine delegation of authority.
11. There are numerous statements in the Old Testament explicitly testify to God's authority. Just to mention a couple:
12. Psalm 62:11 says that "power belongs to God."
13. 2 Chronicles 20:6 (NKJV) says, "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand

is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?”

14. The New Testament attributes the same authority to the Lord Jesus.
15. He said after His resurrection in Matthew 28:18 (NKJV) “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”
16. Paul affirmed that in the end, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil.2:10).
17. Jude wrote in Jude 1:25 (NKJV) To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion (authority) and power, both now and forever. Amen.

18. The authority of Scripture is directly derived from the authority of God.<sup>2</sup>
19. And the Scripture, as we have stated, is the very words of God.
20. And Sola Scriptura is the doctrine of the Reformation that says the Bible alone is the Word of God.<sup>3</sup>
21. Last time we looked at Psalm 19 and learned that the Bible is perfect (complete), sure (trustworthy), right (it lays down the right path), pure (let's you see what you'd never see), clean (without spot), and true and righteous.

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine, p.106.

<sup>3</sup> Golden Hills Community Church. The Five Solas: Foundational Truth that Defines Our Faith . Kindle Edition.

22. In the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) it is literally “God breathed.”
23. That is what is meant in verse 16 when it says “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”
24. The Bible is the very words of God and it is authoritative in our lives.
25. Verse 16 continues by saying “and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
26. The word “profitable” in verse 16 means “beneficial.”

27. God's word is beneficial for 5 things in verses 16-17: It is beneficial for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness and it can make the “man of God...complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
28. The reformers understood this and set out to reform the Catholic church but the Church would not repent.
29. Instead they killed many of the Reformers like John Wycliffe, John Huss, and later William Tyndale.
30. They tried to kill Martin Luther but God spared Him.
31. Al Mohler says, when talking about the significance of the Reformation, “We must

always remember that what was at stake in the Reformation was nothing less than the authority of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ... The material principle of the Reformation was sola fide the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This central emphasis in Luther's theology was not only the truth of the gospel that liberated him from perpetual guilt and "swung open the gates of heaven" but it was also the public rally point for the Reformation. The truth that sinful man could be justified by faith alone, apart from works of the law and apart from the sacramental system of Rome, ignited the firestorm of the Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Golden Hills Community Church (2106-02-07T01:28:15). The Five Solas: Foundational Truth that Defines Our Faith (Kindle Locations 95-101). Kindle Edition.

32. The next sola is just as important as the first.
33. It is, as Luther said, “the article on which the church stands or falls.”
34. It is Sola Fide.
35. Sola Fide means by “faith alone.”
36. We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.
37. William Roach, in writing in his preface in his book Sola Fide says, “The doctrine of justification by faith alone was the center of the Reformation debates. The Reformers declared that justification is by faith alone, not by faith and works. This declaration of sola fide by Luther, Calvin,

and the Reformers caused a great schism throughout Christendom. The issue that divided Roman Catholics from the Protestant Reformers was not a secondary or tertiary doctrine. The dispute focused upon the very essence of the gospel...I contend, along with the Reformers and classic evangelicalism, that (sola fide)...is essential to the gospel, in that, without the Protestant doctrine of justification we do not have a gospel. And without the gospel, we have no salvation.”

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38. This is why Martin Luther saw this as the “the article with and by which the church stands, without which it falls” (articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae).

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<sup>5</sup> Roach, William C.. Sola Fide: A Primer on Paul's Doctrine of Justification in Romans (p. 1). Bastion Books. Kindle Edition.

39. He said of justification, “The article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrines; it preserves and governs all church doctrine and raises up our conscience before God. Without this article the world is utter death and darkness.”
40. Elsewhere He wrote: “If the article of justification is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time.”<sup>6</sup>
41. Luther was not alone in regarding justification by faith alone with such singular importance. John Calvin likewise attached crucial importance to it: “The doctrine of Justification ... is the principal ground on which religion must be

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<sup>6</sup> Sproul, R.C. Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification. electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000. Print.

supported, so it requires greater care and attention. For unless you understand first of all what your position is before God, and what the judgment [is] which he passes upon you, you have no foundation on which your salvation can be laid, or on which piety towards God can be reared.”<sup>7</sup>

42. J. I. Packer commenting on Luther’s formula that justification by faith is the article of doctrine on which the church stands or falls (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*):
  
43. “By this he meant that when this doctrine is understood, believed, and preached, as it was in New Testament times, the church stands in the grace of God and is alive; but where it is neglected, overlaid,

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<sup>7</sup> Sproul, R.C. Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification. electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000. Print.

or denied, as it was in medieval Catholicism, the church falls from grace and its life drains away, leaving it in a state of darkness and death. The reason why the Reformation happened, and Protestant churches came into being, was that Luther and his fellow Reformers believed that Papal Rome had apostatised from the gospel so completely in this respect that no faithful Christian could with a good conscience continue within her ranks.<sup>8</sup>

44. He's right! Everything stands or fall on this truth!
45. Listen to what the apostle Paul says in Romans 3:19-24 (NASB) Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to

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<sup>8</sup> Sproul, R.C. Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification. electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000. Print.

those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

46. We have all sinned and are condemned under the Law but “as a gift” of God’s

grace “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” He justified the ungodly.

47. Our justification is only possible through Christ.
48. The Law cannot justify you nor can you justify yourself.
49. Isaiah 53:11 (NASB) My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.
50. Our justification is through Jesus.
51. Romans 3:28 says, we are “justified by faith apart from the works of the Law”.

52. Because Jesus bore our iniquities, “God will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” (Rom.3:30).
53. In other words, both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith.
54. As Martin Luther came to understand Hab.2:4, “The just shall live by faith,” he said, “Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the righteousness of God and the statement that “the just shall live by faith.” Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before “the righteousness of God” had filled me with

hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven..."<sup>9</sup>

55. We are not saved by works or by keeping the Law.
56. We are not saved by church membership or baptism or walking an aisle.
57. We are saved as, Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB) says, "by grace through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."
58. Romans 3:24 (NASB) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.reformationtheology.com/2010/05/the\\_tower\\_experience\\_1.php](http://www.reformationtheology.com/2010/05/the_tower_experience_1.php)

59. Romans 4:13 (NASB) For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.
60. Romans 5:1 (NASB) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
61. Galatians 3:8-11 (NASB) The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in

the book of the law, to perform them.” 11  
Now that no one is justified by the Law  
before God is evident; for, “The righteous  
man shall live by faith.”

62. Let's understand sola fide more by looking at Romans 3:21-31.
63. Here we learn the provision of God's righteousness.
64. In chapters one and two, Paul made his case perfectly shutting all under sin by showing us three groups: the unrighteous Gentiles (1:18-32), unrighteous Jews (2:1-3:8), and unrighteous Humankind (3:9-20).

65. In other words, Paul has just given the bad news of the Gospel.
66. Man is under sin and without excuse.
67. What can he do?
68. This is now where the gospel becomes good news.
69. Praise the Lord there is a solution to man's dilemma!
70. In 3:21-31 Paul begins the subject of justification by showing us the Source of Righteousness.
71. Notice in verse 21 the phrase "the righteousness of God."

72. The righteousness that God requires sinners cannot provide.
73. The only righteousness man possesses or attains within himself is unrighteousness, because that is the character and substance of his fallen nature.
74. Man's "righteous deeds," Isaiah declares, "are like a filthy garment," referring to a menstrual cloth (Isa. 64:6).
75. The light of righteousness comes only from above.
76. So, the righteousness that God requires is that which He alone gives.

77. Verse 22 says it comes through “faith in Jesus Christ.”
78. Before we look at verses 21-31, let’s define what we mean by “justification.”

## **LESSON**

### **I. The Meaning of Justification**

First, we need to make clear that...

#### **A. Justification is Not an Act of Divine Pardon**

1. In justification, God does not pardon the sinner.

- a) When a criminal is pardoned, he is forgiven of his crime and set free.
- b) Justification does involve forgiveness but we need not confuse the act of divine justification with an act of pardon.

## 2. In Justification God Makes a Legal Declaration

- a) We call it a forensic declaration
- b) Forensics has to do with judicial judgment or declaration
- c) The New Testament shows us that in the act of justification God makes a judicial declaration about a person's status before he

makes his judgment

- d) What happens in justification is not a pardon; it is an act whereby God declares a person to be just
- e) This is not a change in the sinner's character or nature, only a change in his status, but it carries ramifications that guarantee other changes will follow
- f) Forensic decrees like this are fairly common in everyday life
- g) When a man and woman are married, they stand before the minister and recite their vows and at the end of the ceremony, the

minister says, “By the authority vested in me by the state of ???, I pronounce you husband and wife.”

- h) Instantly they are legally husband and wife whereas seconds before they had been an engaged couple, now they were married
- i) Nothing inside them actually changed when those words were spoken
- j) But their status changed before God, the law, and their family and friends
- k) When the minister spoke those words, it was a legal declaration

only

- l) In a similar manner, when a jury foreman reads a verdict, the defendant is no longer the “accused.”
- m) Legally and officially he instantly becomes either guilty or innocent—depending on the verdict
- n) Nothing in his actual nature changes, but if he is found not guilty he will walk out of court a free person in the eyes of the law, fully justified

B. In Biblical Terms, Justification is a Divine Verdict of “Not Guilty—Fully

Righteous.”

1. It is the reversal of God’s attitude toward the sinner
2. Whereas He formerly condemned, He now vindicates
3. Although the sinner lived under God’s wrath, as a believer he or she is now under God’s blessing
4. Justification is more than simple pardon; pardon alone would still leave the sinner without merit before God
5. So when God justifies He imputes divine righteousness to the sinner (Rom.4:22-25)

6. Christ's own infinite merit thus becomes the grounds on which the believer stands before God
7. So justification elevates the believer to a realm of full acceptance and divine privilege in Jesus Christ
8. So justification is the act by which God judicially declares a person to be righteous in his sight

Next we need to understand...

## **II. The Meaning of Faith**

- A. Faith Means That We Place Our Trust in Christ and His Righteousness

1. We do not trust our own righteousness because we do not have any
2. When we trust Christ's righteousness on our behalf and embrace him, then God transfers legally his righteousness to us

## B. A Double Transfer is Involved In Salvation

1. Christ dies for our salvation, but he also lives for our salvation
2. Our sins are transferred to Jesus, and he died on the cross for us to bear those sins

3. This is a legal transfer
4. God did not reach down into our souls and grab a hunk of sin and place it on the back of Jesus
5. God assigned our guilt to his Son
6. He transferred it from us to Christ, but that is only half the transaction
7. The other half is that he took Christ's righteousness and assigned it to us when we believed so that now when God looks at us, knowing all of our righteousness is as filthy rags, we will not perish

8. He has given us the cloak of the righteousness of Jesus
9. That is the righteousness of God that Paul introduced in Romans 1, the righteousness not by which God himself is righteous but that which he makes available to all who put their trust in Christ
10. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (vv. 22—24).

Now that's what we see as we look at  
3:21-31...

God provides the solution to man's problem

of sin and judgment by sending Jesus Christ to earth to take the judgment sinners deserve

Jesus, who is perfectly righteous and has no sin, became sin on the cross

He took man's sin and punishment upon Himself, thus freeing those who trust in Him of sin and making them righteous before God

This is why “this section has been called ‘the heart of the epistle and of the Pauline message.’”

It addresses man's sin and condemnation by providing the righteousness of God which is available by faith in Jesus Christ

Now notice the phrase in verse 21...

### **III. The Righteousness of God**

God's righteousness is different from all other kinds of righteousness in many ways

First of all, it is different because of...

#### **A. Its Source**

Which is God Himself.

Isaiah 45:8 (NASB) "Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the

Lord, have created it.

Second, God's righteousness is different in...

## B. Its Essence

It is a comprehensive righteousness that fulfills both the precept and the penalty of God's law, under which all men stand judged

The precept of God's law is the perfect fulfillment of it

In other words, it is sinless perfection, which only Jesus fulfilled

He kept every requirement of God's law without even the most minute deviation or shortcoming

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin

In order for Jesus to fulfill the penalty of the law for sinful mankind, God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor.5:21)

1 Peter 2:24 (NASB) and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

God's righteousness is different because of its source and essence and also because of...

### C. Its Duration

His righteousness is everlasting righteousness, existing from eternity to eternity

Throughout Scripture His righteousness is referred to as everlasting

1. Psalms 119:142 (NASB) Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.
2. Isaiah 51:8 (NASB) "For the moth will eat them like a garment, And the

grub will eat them like wool. But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation to all generations."

3. Daniel 9:24 (NASB) "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

The person who therefore receives God's righteousness receives everlasting righteousness.

Now as we come to the next section, verses 21-31, "Paul teaches that what we could not effect ourselves (righteousness) because we are under the wrath of God,

God has provided as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ.”

#### **IV. How Believers Are Justified (vv.21-31)**

Notice several things about the righteousness that God gives to the sinner...

- A. It is Apart From the Law (v.21)
- B. It is Witnessed By the Law and the Prophets (v.21)
- C. It is Through Faith in Jesus Christ (v.22)
- D. It is Only for Those who Believe (v.22)
- E. All have Sinned According to Verse 23

F. Justification is a “gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (v.24) so...

G. It is Provided Only Through the Redemption of Christ (v.24) and the “propitiation in His blood” (v.25)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The question this morning is “Have you been declared by God to be righteous?”
2. Remember it is only by faith in Jesus Christ.

3. No faith. No righteousness from God. Only wrath.
4. How do you become righteous?
5. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ and He gives you His righteousness and declares you to be justified.
6. This is sola fide.
7. Let's pray.