


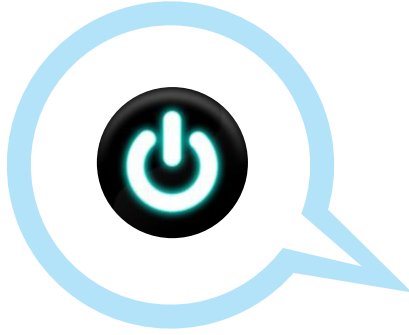
TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. *—Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. *—Joshua 22:5*

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Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Discuss the distinction between the "what" and the "how" of salvation (see Sermon Summary). **Why** is this distinction significant?
- At the site, <webstersdictionary1828.com>, look up the word "grace". (There are 20 definitions given for just the noun!) Notice the similarities in the first dozen and the fact that they're all biblical. Now look up "grace" at <dictionary.com>. What do you notice and how does it contrast with Webster's? Which dictionary better captures your understanding of grace?

Read each verse associated with the first nine definitions in Webster's. What do you learn about grace?

- Now repeat the above steps with the word "faith", discussing what you find.
- Now discuss in detail Webster's 4th definition of faith. What about that definition makes sense to you? Which elements confuse you? Are there any with which you disagree? (Review and discuss content from chapters 13-14 of Grudem to try to resolve your questions.)
- Do you have trouble living a grace-based relationship with God? Why or why not?
How can we as a group help each other do so?

Application-Challenge

- Many people find the idea offensive that salvation is by grace through faith, based solely on the death of Christ in our place. Do you? If so, ask yourself "Why?"
- If you have trouble trusting God, then get to know God as he truly is. Study chapter 2 of Wayne Grudem's *Christian Beliefs*.
- Review the five misunderstandings of faith that we looked at today (see Sermon Summary). Do you see any elements of those in your life? Repent of misplaced faith or unworthy views of God. Trust in the True God as he's revealed in the Bible.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

October 31st, just a few weeks away, marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the event that sparked a "reboot" of Christianity. The first, most foundational of those truths is "Sola Scriptura"—Scripture alone is our source of truth. The second question the Reformers addressed was, "What does God reveal in his Word about the nature of mankind's problem—and therefore what is the solution? It is sin, and the only solution for man's sin problem is the sinless God-man, Jesus Christ: "Solus Christus". Today we move to the next question: how does God apply his salvation to our problem? The Reformers' answer: "Sola Gratia" and "Sola Fide"—"only grace" and "only faith". We're saved "by grace through faith alone".

An illustration from normal life can help us understand spiritual realities. Early in World War II a third of a million allied soldiers were cut-off by the advancing German army. Soon they were trapped on the beach of Dunkirk, being mowed down from the air as they were driven into the sea. Civilian fishing boats and small pleasure craft helped with the rescue. These small boats illustrate well the ideas of "Sola Gratia" and "Sola Fide". What rescued those soldiers? The boat did! But how could a boat rescue someone? You had to get into the boat! We could say that soldiers were saved by a boat through getting in it. Both are necessary: if you have faith—but no boat—you're still stuck on shore! But if you have a boat—but no faith to get in it—and you're still stuck on shore!

Ephesians 2:8-9 applies this to salvation. Remember, we need a "what" and a "how". The "what" of our salvation is the grace of God. The "how" of our salvation is faith. Notice that those of us who have trusted in God's grace "have been saved". This is called a "past perfect" tense because the action is completed. God has already saved those who have trusted in his grace. Most of this passage is a statement about what salvation isn't: Salvation is not of us. There is nothing in our being or nature which contributes anything to our salvation. And our salvation is not a result of anything we do.

Many people find the idea that salvation is by grace through faith, and based solely on the finished work of Christ—many people find that idea offensive. Why? Why would we be offended by being given a free gift? Because we like to boast. We're proud, and we don't want to admit that when it comes to salvation, we're all "charity cases". But we are! (Also see Titus 3:3-7; Isaiah 59:2 and Psalm 49:7-8). This offends our human pride. Grace is the exact opposite of any supposed worthiness on our part. Our relationship with God is based on either works or grace (Romans 11:6). But God loves us, and this leads to security and rest (Colossians 1:12-14; Hebrews 4:3, 10). In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. Solus Christus! And he accomplished this by grace, through faith alone. Sola Gratia, Sola Fide!

But there are a few misunderstandings about faith which need to be cleared-up. People often speak of "blind faith" or "a blind leap" or "a leap of faith in the dark". Many say "just have faith"—but they don't specify in what. But faith must have a "what". We have faith in something. We trust in something. We depend on something. But with blind faith, we're having faith in nothing! Biblical salvation is faith in the grace of God. Faith in Christ's gracious death in our place.

Others hold the view that it doesn't matter what the object of your faith is, just so long as your faith has one. It's gotta be faith in something—but what you have faith in can vary from person to person (religion, or spirituality, or fate, or trust in ourselves, or in science). The important thing, according to this view, is that you be sincere in your belief. But the value of your faith depends upon whether the object of your faith is trustworthy. Faith in man-made saviors such as religion, self-confidence, or science, are useless.

Others believe that faith is a "white-knuckle ride"—no matter what your faith is in. But when our faith is in a trustworthy object—such as Christ—then we should be at peace. Jesus slept in a boat in the middle of a storm because he had absolute confidence in God. Confidence in God is always warranted—even when the circumstances look dire—because the reliability of the object of our faith is all that matters.

Some people think that faith involves "twisting God's arm"—getting him to do something he doesn't really want to do. This view insults God (suggesting that he doesn't love us) and it glorifies us (suggesting that we're powerful enough to get God to do something he doesn't want to do!). If ever you find yourself with this attitude, it is to be repented of.

Our fifth and final perversion of biblical faith is that strong faith allows us to "name it and claim it"! Just name what you want—healing, money, or a mate—and believe it hard enough, and you're sure to get it! They'll even quote Bible verses to support it, but this isn't faith, it's entitlement! It's presumption. And it's ugly.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

The Reformation affirmed “Sola Gratia, Sola Fide”—salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But what does it mean to believe? Let’s see...

In Romans 10:9-14 God promises us that...

⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. ¹¹ The Scriptures says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disappointed.” ¹² The Lord generously gives to all who call on him. ¹³ For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” ¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

- What do you think it means to "openly declare" (v. 9)?
- How is "openly declaring" linked to "believing in your heart" (v. 9)? Are they the same or different?
- Why do we openly declare "that Jesus is Lord" but believe in our hearts "that God raised him from the dead"?
- Is being "made right with God" the same as being "saved" (v. 10)?
- How have you seen the promise in v. 11 to be true in your life?
- What do you think it means to "call on the name of the Lord" (v. 13)?
- What four steps do you see in the chain of events in v. 13-14? (Note: they're in reverse chronological order.)

Let’s explore the call to faith. According to the following verses, what should be included in gospel proclamation?

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-6
- Romans 3:23
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 5:8
- Matthew 11:28 & John 1:11-12
- Acts 20:21 & Luke 24:47
- John 3:16 & Acts 3:19
- John 6:37

From the following verses, describe elements of the divine–human cooperation in conversion:

- Matthew 11:28 **vs.** John 6:44 & 65
- 2 Timothy 2:24-25a **vs.** 2:25b-26
- Mark 9:24
- Colossians 1:28-29
- Romans 10:13 **vs.** John 1:13

Read Ezekiel 36:22-36. Clearly **we** benefit in salvation, but what other motives does **God** have?

- Throughout this passage, circle references to God (eg, "I", "my holy name", etc.) with one color, and references to us (eg, "you", "your") in another. What do you observe?