

SUMMARY AND REVIEW:

Take 10-15 minutes to discuss Sunday’s sermon “*On This We Stand*.” Ideally hear from group members who attended different services. It was Jim’s intention that this sermon clearly demonstrate the connection between the Reformation (specifically the Five Solas) and the gospel. ***Did you come away with a strong sense of that connection?***

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

This week we take a break from the Job series to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It is a good time to take stock of what it is that we believe as Christians in the “Reformed Tradition.” There are five basic theological principles, referred to as the “Five Solas” (*sola* being the Latin word for “only” or “alone”), that emerged from the Reformation:

- Sola Fide, faith alone
- Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone
- Sola Christus, Christ alone
- Sola Gratia, grace alone
- Soli Deo Gloria, God’s glory alone

This week’s texts point us to faith in Christ as the only source of our salvation and remind us that it is by God’s grace we are saved, through faith alone, and not by any works of our own doing.

READ: Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9

ANALYZE THE TEXT

The context of Chapter 4 of Acts is best understood by starting back in Chapter 3. Peter and John heal a lame man “In the name of Christ Jesus the Nazarene (3:6).” Peter then preaches what are in effect two short sermons that actually deliver a strong gospel message and touch on several of the 5 Solas. ***Read Acts 3:1-4:22. What elements of the gospel do you see? How many of the 5 Solas are at least alluded to?*** (Note: Your small group leader has been sent separately some hints to help with this.)

Similarly, it is useful to consider Eph. 2:8-9 in the context of the earlier, particularly 2:1 – “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Understanding that we are separated from God because of sin is the foundational starting point for the gospel. Although Eph. 2:8-9 is often thought of as a “by faith and not works” passage (which it clearly is), ***read together vv. 4-9. In addition to faith, which of the other Solas stands front and center in this passage?***

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. How, if at all, would a better understanding of reformed theology in general and the Five Solas in particular be helpful to you in presenting and explaining the gospel to an unsaved person?
2. The very idea of our faith being described in terms of “Solas” (these things alone) seems to affirm criticism of Christians by non-believers or adherents to other faiths that we are non-inclusive, overly doctrinal, even unloving. “You must believe this and this only,” etc. As a Christian, how would you respond? Discuss.
3. R. C. Sproul, in an article entitled *The Reformation Rescued the Gospel*, quotes Martin Luther as saying that justification by faith alone is “the article upon which the church stands or falls.”¹ The Reformers felt that to reject justification by faith alone was to reject the gospel, which is essential to Christianity and salvation.² This position was strongly rejected by the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th Century and some would say that it still is. We all have friends and even loved ones who are Roman Catholic. Does the fact that they see a different pathway to salvation trouble you? How would you discuss it with them?

APPLY: If your group is willing, break up into groups of men and women for the application.

1. Dr. Timothy says that one of the most difficult things for Christians to do is to live as though the Gospel is actually true.³ Do you find yourself sometimes living to please God, rather than merely accepting His grace? Be as candid as possible.
2. There is much discussion today about the need for “gospel renewal.” On a personal level, this means moving beyond mere intellectual assent to the point where the gospel doctrines of sin and grace are actually experienced, not just known intellectually (again paraphrasing Keller.) Do you feel the need for personal gospel renewal, and what would that look like in your life?

MEMORIZE Eph. 2:8-9

¹ *Bible & Theology*, The Gospel Coalition, January 23, 2017.

² *Ibid.*

³ Keller, Timothy, *Center Church*, 54-55.