

*We trust in You, Father God, that your Holy Spirit through your Word alone can do a work in our hearts that needs to be done and so we will trust in that right now. And for each person calling out to You, I pray that your Word will have an answer right now; that your Word will make a way. I pray that You would soften our hearts; break down the walls that have been built for years. I pray that all the noise and all the interruptions and all the things that take our mind off of your Book right now would be removed, and that we would become strangely focused not on me but on You, Jesus, and that your Word would come through clearly.*

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

One of the things we struggle with every time we step into this arena is that the thing that we're focusing in on, the thing that we would say would be the object of our faith—Jesus Christ alone—is something that we have never seen a picture of. We ask you to put your eyes on the cross and to think about what the work that was done on the cross 2,000 years ago; you and I weren't there. We have not seen video footage of the actual crucifixion in real time. We live in a world where we realize facts through those kinds of things. We talk about heaven. We talk about what happens at that moment of death when we cross that line; and we talk about the fact that being absent from the body is present with the Lord if we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And yet, outside of Jesus no one has come back from the other side. Oh, I know you've read some best-selling books, that's why they're best-selling books because we long so bad to have a picture, to have a description, and we don't have that. People aren't coming back with snapshots. They don't have rolling footage.

And so there is a moment where despite all of our knowledge and despite all of our facts, despite all of our explanation of God, we remember that the Scripture says no one's ever seen God.<sup>1</sup> And so there is a moment where we have to step across a line into this place called faith and that is really hard for some in this room because of what you've studied, what you've read, what you've watched; to move into that land of believing something that you have not seen personally. It'll be 500 years, I believe, Tuesday, in 1517 a guy by the name of Martin Luther, a guy struggling like crazy because he lives in this world where the church in Europe in that time was one that was very centered around works, religion, about all sorts of different festivities and festivals and ceremonies and rituals, that if you do these things you get to God. And the guy's trying, trying, trying to do his best. He feels the weight of his sinfulness and yet he can't ever get completely over that. And the moment he thinks that he's doing better, BAM! Something else hits him and he struggles, struggles, struggles with it until he gets to opening up the book of his Bible named Romans. And he gets to Romans chapter 1 and he reads two verses and it ignites something inside of him that changes his life forever.

If you have your Bibles, would you open up to the book of Romans. We are a people of the Book here. I told you last week that we're not going to put most of the verses up on the screen on purpose because I want to bait you to bring your Bibles to church. It amazes me that across America today our churches don't have Bibles in them. It's crazy. So we want to—and I think it's because of the big screen behind us, it's sort of like become closed captioning—I want us to be people digging into our Bibles. I want you to be able check what I'm saying and dig into it. I want you to be able to go back to it this week. I want to whet your appetite. I am not going to finish this message today; I learned that first hour. And so, this is a subject huge and this is how huge it is: We're gonna be talking about faith.



<sup>1</sup> See Exodus 33:20, John 1:18, John 5:37, John 6:46, 1 Timothy 6:15-16.



We started out by talking about Scripture, *Scripture alone*, because out of this Aha! moment that Martin Luther had, some numerous tenets came out of it. We're calling them the SOLAS. The word SOLA means alone. By the way, I didn't name that. He came out with these terms, *Scripture alone*. This is what we're going to base our facts on, not what some teacher is teaching us, not what some tradition tells us, not what some ritual tells us. We're gonna go to this Book, we're gonna put everything we know up against it, *Scripture alone*.

Then last week we talked about *Grace alone*. It's unmerited favor; nothing I could deserve, nothing I could earn. What He did on the cross to forgive me of my sins, the blood that was shed was shed to forgive my sins and I can't do anything to get that. It's a gift. It's *Grace alone*. Unmerited favor.

And today we're going to talk about *Faith alone*. It is that *Faith alone* that gives us access to that grace. And as I've been reading the book of Romans this week, as I've been digging into this, here's what I found. You know how when you get a new car all of a sudden you notice that everyone owns one of those? They're everywhere. The word *faith* is everywhere in this book. And I want you to see it and I just want you to know I started plumbing these different words and just studying them trying to understand them. That's why I have too much to tell you today. There's too much to tell you here. This needs to be foundational in your understanding of Christianity. And Paul in the book of Romans, he sets out to explain Christianity, to defend Christianity, and as he does so he lays a foundation for us of some crazy important stuff. This message, this subject, this topic of faith is absolutely critical that everyone would understand in this room.

You should have received a program on your way in. We have a place for notes on here, a pen on the back of your seat. If you want to steal it, you're welcome to and take it home with you. If you want to, just leave it on in the book at the restaurant this afternoon with the tip and then they'll know to come back to Calvary sometime, but we'd love for you to take notes on here. Back to Martin Luther.

Here's what he found out. When he read Romans chapter 1, verse 16, this is what he read. Let me read it to you:

<sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel,*

— the gospel means the Good News. What we're about to talk about is good news. It's a key word in the book —

*for it is the power of God for salvation to*

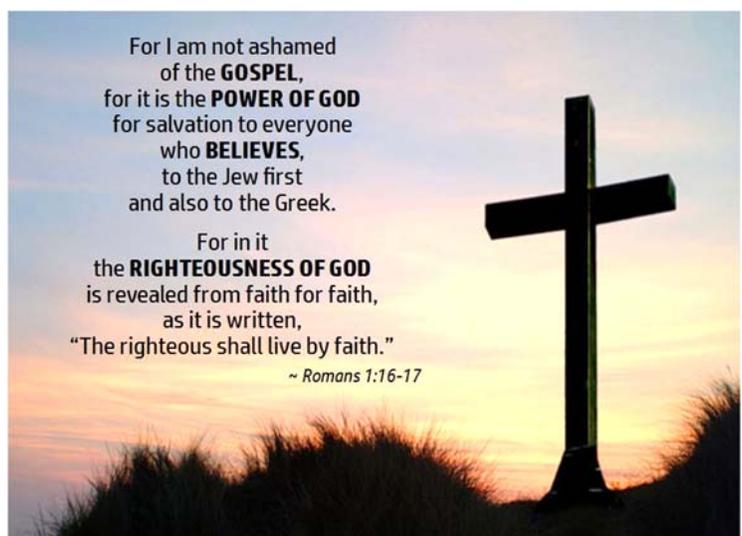
— what's that next word?

*everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

— so for the Jews and the Gentiles —

<sup>17</sup> *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,*

~ ROMANS 1:16-17a



— dig into that a little bit this week —

*as it is written, “The righteous*

— those who are made right with God —

*will live by faith.”*

**~ ROMANS 1:17b**

If you want to be righteous, if you want to be made right with God, you will live by faith.

It's in that moment Martin Luther has his eyes opened. He said it was as if this huge weight fell and all of a sudden in that moment he realized that his salvation is not by how much he can do that is good and how much he can follow so that he can be good enough to get to God, but that it is faith; it is faith in what God has said, what God has revealed. It is that that is the gospel—the Good News—that he can believe in for salvation from God to be made right with God. That was his story some 500 years ago.

Here's our story. I believe that most of us have given into a mindset that is freely propagated in our time of moralism. Moralistic behavior, behavioral modification, whatever you want to call it, that if I behave this way, I think God's going to look at me and say, "Not bad for a human." Most of the religious systems we have been raised in, and I would say that many of the religious systems that many of you are from, have prescribed a set of rituals and behaviors that if done you are somehow led to believe that that will bring the smile of God on your life. And even if it doesn't by the time of death, maybe sometime thereafter if the people following you behave right that you can get it. It's not true, but it's something that we have all struggled with. Even in the background that I came with which would have openly and easily confessed that to put our trust in Jesus alone, by faith alone, for grace alone, was the correct way, there was immediately thereafter placed a yoke and burden on us of, "Now you've got to behave in a certain way." And then you wondered when you weren't behaving in that certain way, I mean, maybe I'm not a Christian. Maybe I'm not a Christ follower. Maybe something's going wrong here. And that's the burden most of us have had placed on us.

You don't come from a religious background. Maybe you come from a background where, like, you were the absolute antithesis to religious. Like, if we knew your background we might have an officer in here right now sitting next to you just keeping an eye on you, and you're thinking, "Yeah, sort of." But you're here because all of a sudden you realize, "Wait a minute; I need to be right with God. I know something is desperately wrong inside of me and I'm trying to figure it out." But even in that moment what ends up happening is the same impulses that have impacted you, honestly, have impacted every religious person in this room, causes us to think wrong thoughts, act wrong behaviors. And when those come oftentimes what happens in the church is we go, "I'm out. I've tried, I've tried, I'm tried, and God, I just quit. We'll see what happens. Let it all work out as it works out." And as a result, many have walked away.

If we understand this fact of faith and we begin to grasp this and we get this in our life and we understand what the book of Romans says, it's going to free us. And that's what I want for you this morning. I want freedom. The book of Galatians, if you want to want some other reading to do this week, helps us with this freedom; this freedom from this *I-gotta-do-it* checklist mentality to the grace of Jesus Christ through faith alone. I want for you that kind of freedom. I want you to walk out of here like Luther did that day where it's like this huge weight was lifted off. Like the sky opened up, there was fresh air and blue skies above you saying [*he gives a huge sigh of relief*], "Thank you, God." Having a right relationship with God. So let me let me take you on a quick jet tour of the book of Romans' first five chapters.

Chapter 1 of Romans the Apostle Paul, as he's trying to work the Romans through this, says that those who would be considered a heathen have a problem. So normally when you start talking to someone about the gospel, this Good News that can be found in this Book alone, when you begin talking about that there's this push back of, "What about the heathen? What about that person who's never heard? What about that person that you talk to who is a really good person, but they have not put their trust in Jesus? It's that person right now that took the weekend to head up into the mountains to go sit in a tree and meditate and that's where they get their idea of God and they explained that to you. And when they explained that to you you're supposed to at work go, "Oh, mmm, good. Mmm, mmm, yes." And Paul in Romans chapter 1 talks about this person and says they have a problem, they are not right with God.

I'm just gonna give you a real quick look at that; Romans chapter 1, verse 18, look at this.

*<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

— now listen to this verse 19 —

*<sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

— Wow. Capture that. Remember that the next time you talk to this person. This person's far away from God. This person that doesn't understand what we understand here today. They, too, are without excuse. Even though they're sitting there staring at the trees, God says He has revealed a number of His attributes enough to let them understand there is a God. His divine attributes and His divine power, so much so that they could call out to God and He would create a way for them to respond. But listen to verse 21:

*<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

Thus, you see all the idols that get placed in and you know what the 10 Commandments say—putting no other idol before God—we find all these little figurines and these little things and this is what slips into religion over time and we begin to worship items. We begin to worship, look at what it says, “resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

*<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,*

— listen to this —

*<sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

~ ROMANS 1:18-25

Here's the bottom line: They, the heathen, that person far from God, *is* accountable because of creation. Keep on going. So the heathen have a problem; they're accountable.

The next one that he speaks to is in Chapter 2. He speaks to the moral person. He says the moral person has a problem. Then he is going to explain that problem that the moral person has. Think with me; how often have you been in a conversation and you've made this comment, "Yeah, they're not a Christ follower. They don't go to church and not a Christian but, boy, they put all the rest of us Christians to shame." Ever said that? You see, that's the moral person and this is who they are trying to depend on the fact that they're pretty good and how could God look down on me and say I'm not good? I did everything I could." And even we in that moment we have this tendency to go, "Certainly God couldn't send them to Hell. My goodness, of all the people I know, not them.

Chapter 2, verse 1:

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore*

— he's speaking to this group of people —

*you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.*

<sup>2</sup> *We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.* <sup>3</sup> *Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?*

— In other words, I don't care how much you think you're fulfilling the law, you end up doing it yourself, you end up failing it yourself.

This story still irritates me, but it's true. I was a youth pastor for many years and we'd go to these different camps and we'd do these games and this one game we played, I forget what it was called, but it was like Capture the Flag where there was a flag placed and you had to go hide and do all these different kinds of things. And I told the youth before we went out, I gave them a whole bunch of instructions where they could be and where they couldn't be, and this one hill I told them they couldn't hide on and so that hill was off limits. And so we came back after the game was over and I was the only one who had not been caught and I was feeling pretty good about it because I had successfully hid. And so I said something to someone about that as we were about ready to announce, you know, who lost and who won and all that kind of stuff and they said, "Wait a minute; you said we couldn't hide on that hill. We saw you on that hill." I said, "I didn't say that." And honestly, I didn't think I had. I didn't remember. I don't know how you can give an instruction and then do what you said you couldn't do. That's exactly what I did. I hid on that hill. And when I thought I had won I had lost. It was ridiculous. I was so embarrassed. And I kept on turning to people that I know who wouldn't mess with me because I figured someone's messing with me, you know, there's always that jokester in the room trying to mess with you. And I turned to a couple people I know wouldn't do that to me and I went, "Did I say that?" "Yes."

Don't you have situations like that? *Did I really? I did that? I said that?* I get that after sermons often times. "You said such-and-such. You know, that's like blasphemy." Yeah, I said that. "Really?" Go back and listen to the video, "Are you kid— oh, man, that's embarrassing. How'd I say that?" When we say to this moral person you're setting up your morality, you're looking at everyone else going, "Oh, wow, they're not there." And he's saying, "Wait a minute; the spotlight comes right back on you." And then he calls them back and he says in verse 4:

<sup>4</sup> *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

~ ROMANS 2:1-4

That God wants to draw you back to Himself. So those who do good, what he's gonna say here is here's the problem: You have violated your conscience because you know that what you did was wrong. Okay? So you have the heathen, they have a problem; moral people, we have a problem.

Then he speaks to the Jewish people. They're sitting back hearing this discussion because this book of Romans written to the church there in Rome, written to Gentiles as he described here, calls them Greeks as well as Jews, the Jewish people are reading this and they're thinking, "Wow, heathens, absolutely. They've got it wrong. Hey, the moral people, absolutely. They've got it wrong. But look at us, we follow the law. We've got it dialed in." Let me let me read to you a couple verses here. Chapter 2, verse 17, speaking here to the Jewish people who he's going to say you have a problem, too.

*<sup>17</sup> But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God <sup>18</sup> and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; <sup>19</sup> and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,*

~ ROMANS 2:17-19

And he goes on. Listen to verse 23 what he says about that person following the law. And by the way, the law, the law was this big deal for them. They actually had a moral advantage because of it because when you think about the law for a minute, that was God giving them instructions on the best way to live. Here is the law, it's the best way for you to live. Now here's where it goes wrong is they equate best way to live with the way to get to God. And what God's going to say is, if you'll just study these first couple of chapters of Romans, this was never written as the way to get to God. In fact, the law was written so as to let us know that in and of ourselves we can't get to God. Here's what the law was used for, here's why God created the law. The law was created to realize that we were broken.

Ever go into the emergency room after falling off the second story of your house while washing the siding? I thought that was going to happen to me last weekend, but thankfully it didn't. The whole family was pretty sure, too. Here's the deal: You go in there, they immediately take you in and they give you an x-ray. And when they come out what does that x-ray tell them? Broken, or not. You have a problem. Broken in two places, broken in three places. Here's my question for you: When they're done with that x-ray, did that x-ray heal your arm? What did it do? It showed the problem. That's what the law is. It doesn't solve your problem, it just shows you your problem. It doesn't fix the problem, it just reveals the problem. That doesn't mean that it's not the best way to live, but it doesn't get you to God. In fact, it shows you how far short of God you're falling.

So now, let's go back to Romans chapter 2, verse 23:

*<sup>23</sup> You who boast in the law*

— "I follow it!" "I follow it!" "I follow it!" He's speaking to these Jewish people, you have this moral advantage because you're got this great, best way to live. I would call it in my modern-day world "best practices." You've got it and you're going, "I'm doing them." He goes hey,

*You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.*

~ ROMANS 2:23

And they step back and they go [*sigh*].

The heathen has a problem; moral person has a problem; the Jew has a problem.

Chapter 3, look down to verse 10:

<sup>10</sup> as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

— Uh-oh! —

<sup>11</sup> no one understands;

You know, I really don't like that "no one" type language, all or nothing. I'm not real hip on that. I get that all the time, “Everyone's saying, Pastor...” No, you and a couple of your friends led by you. But when God says, “no one understands,” who understands? No one.

*no one seeks for God.*

That's sort of discouraging. If you're here seeking God today, I want to tell you this and I'll explain it to you in a minute—something's going on because that doesn't just happen. Understand God is deeply involved right now. If you're feeling that drawing, if you're saying, “Oh, man, I want this,” something's going on. Put on the alert and listen like you've never listened before right now. Verse 12:

<sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

~ ROMANS 3:10-12

Heathens have a problem. Moral people have a problem. Jews have a problem. We have a problem. No one's righteous. No not one. Now what? Let me take you to chapter 3, verse 21. He tells you that you can be saved even though you and all of those people have a problem. Chapter 3, verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God

— You see, I want to somehow be made right with God, but I've just been told all the right I can do is not enough right. So now all of a sudden the attention leaves me because I'm not going to get it done, it goes to God:

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God

— how's it going to come to you? —

*through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified*

— made right with God so that God sees them as having never sinned —

*by his grace as a gift,*

— Grace alone. You want to be made right with God it's only going to be through the cross of Christ that that is made available to you by grace alone, you can't work for it, you can't earn it, you can't deserve it.

*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by*

— what's the word? —

*faith. This was to show God's righteousness,*

~ ROMANS 3:21-25

When we get to chapter 4 of Romans it's as if there is a response from the Jewish people saying, "W-w-wait! Pull out. This whole law thing's getting me because I look back at my forefathers and I see the law and all this kind of stuff. I'm struggling with this."

And my time is really short here today so I'm just gonna try to give you chapter 4 in a nutshell. He says in Chapter 4, "Hey, there was this guy by the name of Abraham, and he was considered the father of Judaism." And you're looking at this as the laws and this guy's stuff, and he'll explain here if you look down to verse 9, and I'm not gonna read this little section to you because they bring up circumcision which was one of the things in the law, and he says, "Hold on a second. Abraham followed God long before circumcision was even brought into law, some 430 years before." And what we'll read in Hebrews chapter 11, and we can't miss turning there, so turn right in your Bible to the book of Hebrews.

And by the way, if you have trouble finding it, it's about halfway to the back from here. If you have trouble finding it, I forgive you, and the reason why is because I put this little string in my Bible right in that book of Hebrews because half the time I can't find it and there is nothing more embarrassing as a pastor to tell you to turn to a passage and then I can't find it. Hebrews chapter 11, listen to what it says about Abraham in verse 8:

*<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.*

Again, this was an activity that took place 430 years *before* the law came into being. And God comes and speaks to this man like He would speak to you, and God gives him a crazy command, "I want you to get up and"—here, he explains it, the Bible says it better than I do.

*And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

~ HEBREWS 11:8-10

He did something God told him that made zero sense because he was looking forward to what God had for him more than what he was looking forward to the right now. I hope you still have your finger, don't lose the spot in Hebrews, I've got to come back for a minute. If you still have your fingers in chapter 4, verse 18 of Romans:

*<sup>18</sup> In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations,*

— that was what was offered to him when God said get up and move —

*as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead . . .*

Verse 20:

*<sup>20</sup> No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith*

— that indicates that faith can grow —

*as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup> That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."*

~ ROMANS 4:18-22

In other words, the law hadn't even come into being and God is using all this talk about faith and dialing it in with Abraham, someone that lived a long, long, long time ago on purpose for a reason. The reason why he's drawing all that together is to let people know, hey, it wasn't by works then God saw Abraham as righteous. Chapter 11 of Hebrews is this whole story of people that were righteous because they believed what God told them. You see, Abraham only did what he knew. God him whatever he was told. He didn't understand everything we understand. That was all very fuzzy to him; he could put little pieces together, but all he knew was God said right now I want you to get up and I want you to move. I'm going to make you a father of many nations. That didn't fully make sense to him. It probably doesn't make sense to a lot of us right now. But he knew God said it, I'm going to do it, and in that God says that is belief. And when you do what God says to do, that is belief and it takes faith to do that.

Chapter 11 of Hebrews gives a phenomenal definition of faith. I want to read it to you. Chapter 11 of Hebrews, verse 1:



That's how we began today. We haven't seen this stuff. We don't have a picture. We don't have a videotape.

*<sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God,*

You remember back in June we talked about Genesis chapter 1. We talked about how God created the heavens and earth. That was hard stuff. We looked at scientific evidence and there's a lot of it, and scientific proof and there's a lot of it. You also know there were a whole lot of people yelling back at us going, "That's bogus. That's been proven untrue in 2017." And here the writer of the book of Hebrews says to us even what we know and what is highly researched and highly available for you, in fact, there is a point here because we do not have videotape of the beginning, nor does the other side—you will have to take that by faith. That's what faith is.

*so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

~ HEBREWS 11:1-3

One of the things that I recognized as I thought this through, this subject of faith is so big I can't even begin to scratch the surface here today, there's a whole lot to talk about. But the question I have is how do I muster up enough faith. How do you muster up a lot of faith? I tend to have faith in things. A lot of people I talk to, it, you know, I'm okay with some things just going, "God said it." There's some of you in this room and many of you in this room that you're sort of pushed up to this precipice where you're, "I can get okay with that. I can get okay with that. I can trust God for that, but, ooh." So I can trust God that He died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I'm not sure I can trust God with that

creation story, or, I'm not sure I can trust God with—you name it. How do I get that faith? Where's it come from? How do I muster it up? I mean, can I [*he inhales repeatedly*] just get enough faith? I mean, do I have to, like, put my feet in the ground? And yet—so here's two verses I want to throw out to you really fast. If you're taking notes on the back of your piece of paper, write down these two verses.

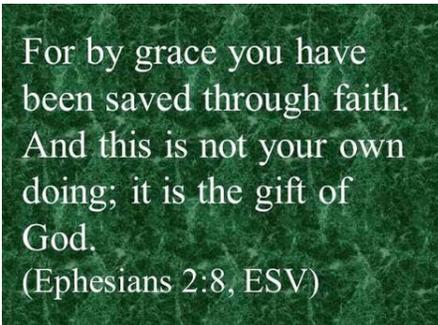
First of all, Ephesians 2:8-9. This is a verse that is a must when it comes to grace in faith. It says:

<sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith.*

The next words are, I almost blow by all the time on this because I want to get to it's a gift of God. Right after faith it says that not of yourselves:

<sup>9</sup> *And this not of your own doing; it is the gift of God.*

~ **EPHESIANS 2:8-9**



For by grace you have  
been saved through faith.  
And this is not your own  
doing; it is the gift of  
God.  
(Ephesians 2:8, ESV)

Here's why I said to you a minute ago if you're feeling drawn at all, you ought to get like really alerted right now and excited because God and His Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you that faith. I'm just convinced. That's what that verse means. That those words that not of yourself is pointing right at faith in the grammar and the structure of that verse.

Let me tell you one other spot if you're not sure about that because you're just not sure about, that let me tell you what Jesus said. Jesus is talking to Peter. Peter is one of those who are inner circle of Jesus, His disciples, His followers, they walk and talk with Jesus every day. They should get it all. They should know it all because they got to see Him in real life, full picture, HD. And so here's Peter and Jesus looks at Peter and He says, "Peter, who do you say I am?" And Peter, as you would expect in the Bible—by the way, if you're taking notes this is Matthew chapter 16, verse 16—if we had a lot more time I'd have us to turn there. There's a lot to look at in this. Matthew 16, verse 16, Peter answers right. He said, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus says<sup>2</sup> good answer but you didn't get that on your own. He says flesh and blood didn't tell you that.

That wasn't me, *I think I'm getting enough faith.* This was God telling you. I stop and wow!

Let me take you to one more verse. Romans chapter 5, verse 1:

*Therefore,*

—By the way, when it says "therefore" it's connecting us with the words before. Remember the chapter references were not in this when it was originally written. This is there just so I can quickly direct you to Romans chapter 5, verse 1.

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,*

—In other words, God sees us without sin because of the grace He's given on the cross in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on our behalf.

*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

~ **ROMANS 5:1**

<sup>2</sup> *And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ~ MATTHEW 16:17*

That was the feeling that Luther had when all of a sudden he realizes that it's by grace through faith, it's not his own works. That's the peace that all of us come into this place longing for today because the world is screaming in our ears and we never feel like we've done enough and we haven't. All of a sudden because of the faith we have in the shed blood of the cross and the grace alone, we step back and we take a deep breath and we have peace.

Verse 2:

*<sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

~ ROMANS 5:2

This faith that God gives you where all of a sudden you're wanting to go, "Wow, that's really weird. Being a scientist I never bought this before." "Being an agnostic I've never been sure this before." Being a person who's traveled the world and searched everything, I've never seen this before." And all of a sudden in this room right now you're feeling strange like, *This is right*. This is God responding and giving it to you.

Here's what I'd say to you; if you aren't sure right now and you're wishing you could feel that, you've never felt that—I've heard that from a number of people in this church. "I want to respond to faith but that step of faith, I just can't make it. I'm up on the edge of the cliff, I want to, that's why I'm here every week, Pastor." I hear this. I can name you five names of people in this church right now that say, "Pastor, I come every week because I want to believe this, but I can't get there." I would say to you say, "God, please, please would you give me that faith so I can step across the line."

And if you're feeling that faith this morning, if you're feeling like, "I get it. Yeah, God, you've got it. I don't understand it all. I'm not—it's still not making some sense and I still have a question about carbon dating versus this, I have a question about how blood on the cross 2,000 years ago can save me now, and I have a question how in the world I can die and immediately be in the presence of God yet my body's in the dirt—I don't understand it, God." You can step back and say, "God, you've got it. You're bigger than me. I'm just little. I just take up this much space. You are [*opens his arms wide*] God." Despite what the people in the carrel next to me are telling me at work every day, this stuff that I'm reading, God you're bigger than them. They're only as big as me, too. I'm done repeating it. I'm gonna trust God."

So I just say to you if you haven't trusted Jesus by faith alone, by grace alone for your salvation, would you take that step of faith right now? Would you step into that? Are you feeling led to that right now? If you are, I'm gonna stop. I have one other thing to say but I'm just gonna stop and ask you, would you bow your head? Would you just tell that to God? I'm not gonna make you do anything. I won't make you stand up. I'm not gonna make you run around. I'm not gonna make you recite something. I wish you'd tell someone after the service, but would you say, "Jesus, I get it. You died to forgive me of my sins and I don't understand, I don't, but by faith I trust You alone for my salvation to be made right with God." Just say that to Him. I don't think there's a right way to say that, that's not me being the pastor that I have the special wording. You talk to God right now and say, "I believe by faith alone, in Jesus alone, by grace alone."

*Lord Jesus,*

*I pray for each person who just stepped across that line. I pray that they would feel a weight lifted. I pray that they leave here today, "Wow! I've been waiting for so long to feel this." I pray that they'll feel the joy of their salvation. I pray that there will be no turning back.*

*It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.*

Hey, just real quickly, just one last thing. For those of you who that's not where you're at today, you've put your faith and trust in Jesus alone, by grace alone, just one thought for you and for me. Oftentimes what we do is we trust Jesus by faith alone and by grace alone, and then we live by works alone. The Scripture says “*walk by faith.*”<sup>3</sup> Because I want encourage you, it's hard to live life the best way. That's why God's given this stuff in here. It's why God gives you the principles about your marriage. That's why God gives you principles on how to treat each other. That's why God gives you principles about the stuff that comes out of your mouth. That's why God gives you principles about generosity and giving. That's why God gives you principles about purity. It's the best way to live, but oh, it's so hard in 2017. And everyone tells you, “That's bogus! It's stupid. You can't live like that.” “You can't go tell the truth tomorrow, you'll lose your job, you fool.” “You can't do that now; everyone's doing it. It's 2017.” Man, we didn't even do that in 1999. Come on, give me a break. It's gonna take faith to go, “God, You're right, and I'm gonna follow You. I'm gonna walk in faith.” So, it's gonna take some faith to obey Him and to live for Him. I challenge you. If you're in that spot, don't, don't, don't try to get to God by your works. It's not gonna work. Get to God by faith through grace alone. You walk by faith, you live by faith knowing that He's right, and you start going, “God, I get it, You're right.” Then keep on digging into this [Bible].



Hey, listen, I haven't even begun, but I will stop. Promise. When they [worship team] come up and play, I know it's over. You have your own Bibles; you don't need someone like me to keep telling you what it says. I would love for you to open up Romans 1 and study it and figure it out. Look at each of these words in the book of Romans on faith. As I said earlier this thing called Christianity is not one of these things meant to be done alone, that's why we have prayer people here that want to pray with you today. Go back into the Prayer Chapel afterwards. They're around in red prayer shirts, it says “PRAY” on it, you can't miss them, they're red shirts. That's why we have small groups and if you're not in a small group but you're going, “Man, I want to study this stuff,” see one of the prayer people. They can take you to Pastor Mike, he's around here somewhere, he'll get you into a small group. He just started a small group this week of young couples. A whole bunch of young couples going, “We want to study the Bible together.” Not reading some other dude's book; that's how this all gets going sideways. Reading God's Book—there's enough in here to keep us busy for a while. So would you commit this week to just digging into this? Scripture alone, by grace alone, by faith alone.

Hey, we're gonna give our gifts to the Lord right now, our tithes and our offerings, and I get it. It's what we were talking about a minute ago, giving back the first ten percent of everything I'm given to use by God—that makes no sense. You can't—it doesn't, cash flow, it doesn't work. That's why I've gotta walk by faith. I go, “God, You said it and I'm just using what's yours. You give; You take away. I'm trusting You with it. I'm gonna walk by faith.” So thank you for all of you who have prepared for this, those of you are already ready to give today, those of you who have already given online before today. Buckets at the end of your rows, if you'll reach under your row that has a bucket on it [*he points here and there*] over here, place your gift in there and pass it across.

Team, lead us as we wrap up.

<sup>3</sup> We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. ~ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6b-7

[Pastor John Lawley closes]

Church, before we dismiss this morning, a couple announcements. If you are a creative person, if you take video or photos or you just have a creative side, we are looking to build a creative team to help promote all the things that are going on here at our church. We have a meeting right after this service in our Student Center. But before you go to that meeting if you're creative and for everyone else, we have cheesesteaks and burgers and hot dogs for you after the service. The cheesesteaks are back. [*One of the youth walks out and hands him a cheesesteak.*] Oh, this is awesome. I love it. And we are bribing you by eating them in front of you. But we have cheesesteaks and burgers and hamburgers for raising money for our students to go on a Senegal mission trip and they prepared all week to do this. It's gonna be in the West Lobby here behind us, and so we would love for you to go out and support them and have a lunch provided for you. And so I'm gonna pray us out and I know you are looking at him [the youth] and not me eating this delicious cheesesteak, so I'm gonna pray us out and then you're dismissed.

*Father,*

*We thank You, Lord, that You are a God worthy of our praise. Lord, we thank you that it is by faith alone to grace. Lord, we are not worthy or deserving of it, Lord, but You lavish your love upon us and your grace upon us. And Lord, we believe it and we walk in faith. So Lord, we ask You to lead us in faith as we walk out into this world and be a light to the hope we have in You.*

*In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.*

We love you. You're dismissed.

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/240399920>

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/hwcuT3qE5Dk>

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