







Sola Fide Defined

Definition:

We are forgiven our sins and counted righteous in God's sight solely by trusting in Christ.

1. Context: Concerns our moral standing before God.
2. Negative aspect: Something is taken away, it involves the removal of guilt for sin, the clearing of all moral debt.
3. Positive aspect: The crediting of a perfect moral righteousness to our account.
4. Means: Faith and faith alone in Christ alone.

Point of clarification on Justification:

1. 'Forensic' justification: a legal declaration by the divine judge.
 - a. This is different from someone actually being made intrinsically righteous...we are counted righteous.
 - i. As it is a declaration, this is an event that takes place in a specific moment of time.
 - b. We do ultimately become intrinsically righteous through the process of sanctification.

Contrasting RC and Reformed views:

The ground/basis of justification-

RC: Infused Righteousness- Christ's righteousness is placed in us- becomes ours. (Initial Justification). However, it must be maintained (Progressive Justification).

Reformed: Imputed Righteousness (not our own righteousness but Christ's). Christ's righteousness is the ground of God's declaration. It is an "alien" righteousness accounted to us, not "intrinsic" being found in us (Not subject to change).

Contrasting RC and Reformed views:

The instrument/means of justification-
RC: faith+works. Works are characterized as works of charity, of love, devotion, or penance. Since justification is a process in which Christ's righteousness is infused into you, it necessarily must be maintained through works.

Reformed: Faith alone. Christ's righteousness is accounted to you before the judgment seat of God. You cannot add to or take away from Christ's righteousness.

Implications

1. We are fully justified before God from the first moment of faith in Christ.
2. A genuine saving faith in Christ is sufficient for final salvation (cf. Romans 8:30).
3. We should put no trust in our own works or efforts to secure our salvation.

Misunderstandings

1. We are justified merely by intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel.
2. We are justified by faith *as such* (i.e. faith in general, with no specific object). As long as you have faith in something.
3. We can be saved without any good works.

Misunderstandings

- 4. God accepts our faith as a substitute for good works.
- 5. We believe in Jesus by a "leap of faith" without any rational or evidential support, just faith and faith alone.
- 6. Our standing before God depends on the strength of our faith.

Scriptural Support

Genesis 15:5-6

⁵And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Matthew 5:20

²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:48

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 23:39-43

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Romans 3:21-31

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Romans 5:1

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Isaiah 53

Summary Argument/Theological basis

- We are fallen in sin and all our moral efforts are tainted by sin.
- Therefore, we cannot be counted righteous (justified) before God on the ground of our own righteousness.
- Therefore, we can only be counted righteous (justified) before God on the ground of an 'alien' righteousness: Christ's righteousness imputed to us.
- It would not be fitting to receive Christ's righteousness by means of good works.
- Therefore, we must receive Christ's righteousness by means of faith alone.

Objections

1. James 2:24 clearly states that we are not justified by faith alone.
2. The Reformed view of justification involves a legal fiction (God declaring something false).
3. Jesus told the lawyer (Luke 10:25-28) and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-20) that they had to do good works to gain eternal life.

Objections

4. The reformed view of justification comes from Paul, not Jesus.
5. Paul nowhere uses the phrases "by faith alone" or "through faith alone".
6. The reformed view of justification leads to antinomianism.

Application

- *Sola Fide* means that the gospel really is “good news” for sinners!
- *Sola Fide* means that we can be free from guilt and the fear of God’s righteous wrath.
- *Sola Fide* is a necessary foundation for petitionary prayer.
- *Sola Fide* is a necessary foundation for assurance of final salvation.

Application

- *Sola Fide* encourages us to pursue ever-greater knowledge of our Savior, Jesus Christ. I
- *Sola Fide* reinforces that we have been saved by grace alone.
- *Sola Fide* cultivates humility and guards us from taking pride in our good works.
- *Sola Fide* reminds us that we are not justified on the basis of our good doctrine.
- *Sola Fide* cultivates a deeper personal appreciation for the great hymns of the faith.
