

Series: “*The Solas of the Reformation—500 Years Later*”

Main Idea: In Hebrews 11:1-4, we learn the importance of Sola Fide by considering what the writer told a group of people who were thinking about walking away from Jesus. The text urges us to consider carefully two things about faith.

- I. We need to carefully consider the definition of faith (1).
  - A. Faith involves the confident expectation of future realities.
    1. We know what is coming.
    2. We need to live like it now.
  - B. Faith involves the conviction of unseen realities.
    1. We know what Christ did in the past.
    2. We know what Christ will do in the future.
    3. We know what Christ is doing in the present.
  - C. Definition: Faith is trusting in the person of God and acting on the promises of God regardless how I feel.
- II. We need to carefully consider the display of faith (2-4).
  - A. We see it by looking at God’s people in the past (2).
    1. All people are sinners.
    2. All people face challenges in life.
    3. God commends people who live, not by their feelings, but by faith.
  - B. We see it by affirming the creation account (3).
    1. Faith is not believing something in spite of the facts.
    2. Faith is believing the account of the One who knows all the facts.
  - C. We see it by looking at Abel (4).
    1. He saw himself as an unworthy sinner.
    2. He approached God on the basis of mercy, not merit.
    3. He received God’s commendation for his actions.
    4. He eventually died, but he still is speaking to us.
    5. He tells us we need to be people who live by faith.

Make It Personal: Where is the resting place for your faith?

*Scripture Reading: Romans 3:21-31*

Last week, on September 15, Violet Brown of Jamaica finished her earthly journey. She was the oldest living person in the world at the time at 117 years. Her secret to longevity? Don’t drink rum, she said.

Aunt V, as she was known, was a church organist for over 80 years.<sup>2</sup>

Wow, 117 years, that’s a long time! Not really. Not compared to what’s coming.

Do you know for sure what is going to happen to you when you leave this world? There is no more important question when you consider that this world is our home for just a few decades maximum but our eternal home is just that. *Eternal*. The place where we will be forever and ever.

The Creator God makes it clear in His Word that there are only two possibilities. One, a person can leave this world and enter a place of unending torment and regret called hell. Or two, a person can leave this world and enter His very presence in a place He calls heaven.

Hell. Or heaven. Those are the two options. Forever.

Then consider this. Because of sin, the first man Adam’s and our own, every human being enters this world cut off from God and heading for hell. Sin. Transgression.

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a message preached in the Hebrews series at WBC 3/15/09.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/17/health/worlds-oldest-woman-trnd/index.html>

Breaking the divine law. Missing the mark. It's our biggest problem, for the One who is holy cannot allow anything unholy to defile His presence.

Can a transgressor undo his transgression? Can he scrub away the sin that tarnishes his life? No, he can't. He is in a hopeless condition, a condemned sinner who will one day die and enter the place of retribution that lawbreakers in God's universe deserve.

This is our predicament. And we transgressors can do nothing about it.

*But God.* Are there more beautiful words than these? "*But God* demonstrated His love for us in this; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)."

God sent His Son on a rescue mission. His Son came to save sinners by dying in their place, thus paying sin's penalty. He then conquered death, returned to heaven, and opened the way for the sinner to be forgiven, reconciled to God, and guaranteed a place in His eternal home.

This is the greatest news a sinner could ever hear. This is the gospel.

But it raises a question. *How?* How does a sinner benefit from what Christ has done? How is he saved from the hell he deserves? How does he gain eternal life with God in heaven? How is a sinner justified?

"What must I do to be saved?" That's the question that a jailor in Philippi asked in Acts 16. And the apostle Paul gave God's answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

A sinner is saved by believing in Christ. Plus nothing. By faith alone.

*Sola fide.* That's the Latin term the Protestant reformers used five hundred years ago as they protested the Roman Catholic church's answer to the question concerning how a sinner is saved.

R. C. Sproul explains the Catholic position, "If a person dies in mortal sin, he goes to hell. If a person dies with any sin, with any imperfection or blemish on his soul, he cannot be admitted into heaven but must first go through the purging fires of purgatory, where his impurities are cleansed away until such time as righteousness is truly inherent in him."<sup>3</sup>

Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers said, *sola fide*. That's how a sinner is justified. But the Catholic church dug in its heels and said *no*.

Sproul says, "The Council of Trent taught that faith is not sufficient in and of itself to yield the result of justification...According to Rome, when a person commits mortal sin while in possession of true faith, faith is not lost but justification is."<sup>4</sup>

R. C. Sproul offers this summary, "The Roman Catholic view is something like this: faith + works = justification. The Protestant view, which I believe is the biblical view, is that faith = justification + works. The Reformers placed works on the far side of the equation, opposite faith, because whatever works we do as Christians add absolutely nothing to the ground of our justification."<sup>5</sup>

You say, "Well, that was centuries ago. What do Roman Catholics think about *sola fide* today?"

Many have never given much thought to it. I googled the question and found a succinct reply at a website called "Catholic Bible 101":

Works (good works, not useless Jewish works of the law) are part of being justified. The Catholic Church teaches that justification begins at Baptism, when the Holy

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<sup>3</sup> *Are We Together*, R. C. Sproul, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Are We Together*, R. C. Sproul, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Are We Together*, R. C. Sproul, p. 40.

Spirit comes to us, even while we are infants. And "being saved" is a lifelong journey that doesn't end until we die and are allowed into heaven. A lot of Protestants talk about "when they were saved", as if it's in the past tense. Catholics would agree that whenever you began taking your faith in Christ seriously was certainly a great time, but it was only a first step, not the entire journey. What really counts is your faith at the time of death, not your faith when you first started believing 20 years ago.<sup>6</sup>

There are many places in the Bible that develop *sola fide*. There is Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

There's Galatians 3:6-7, "So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."<sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham."

There's Romans 3:22, "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

There is Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith...not by works, so that no one can boast."

We've looked at those texts before (check our website for messages on Reformation Sunday in 2015 and 2016). So this morning, as we continue our series, "The Solas of the Reformation: 500 Years Later," I want us to look at *sola fide* from the perspective of a not so familiar text.

It's a passage that was written to a group of people who had professed faith in Jesus for salvation, but due to intense persecution, were thinking about going back into a religious system that said *faith + works = salvation*.

Turn to the book of Hebrews. Hebrews says the One who came to provide salvation is of supreme worth. That's the message of Hebrews 1-10. Jesus Christ is worthy—there's none greater in the universe. And if you believe that, the appropriate response is *faith*. That's the message of Hebrews 11.

But what is faith? In Hebrews 11:1-4, the anonymous, Holy Spirit led author urges us to consider carefully two things about faith.

### I. We need to carefully consider the definition of faith (1).

I don't mean *definition* in a Webster's Dictionary sense, for the writer of Hebrews didn't intend to give us that. He's speaking to an audience of first century Jewish Christians in which some were considering throwing in the towel and going back to their old ways. He's calling these readers to exhibit real *faith*, and wants them to know what that will mean in practical terms.

So he says in verse 1, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

For the writer of Hebrews, faith isn't generic but specific, not subjective but objective, not formal but personal, not static but dynamic, not merely a church-word but a life word.

Now faith *is*, says the writer. In the Greek text, "is" is the first word in the sentence, emphasizing that biblical faith is a present and continuing reality. As Leon Morris

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.catholicbible101.com/thefivesolas.htm> ; The article concludes with these words: "To sum up, all of this shorthand abbreviation for our faith in the 5 solas leads us away from the rest of what is necessary for salvation, like the Church, the Sacraments, prayer, helping the poor, performing good works, etc. After all, why do all of that if it's just me and my bible, me and Jesus, me and whatever..."

explains, “It is a living thing, a way of life the writer wishes to see continued in the practice of his readers.”<sup>7</sup>

Faith involves two components, according to verse 1.

**A. Faith involves the confident expectation of future realities.** That’s in the first phrase, “Faith is being sure of what we hope for.” The Greek word for “sure” [“assurance” in the ESV, “substance” in the KJV] is *hypostasis* which literally means “that which stands under.”<sup>8</sup> As Warren Wiersbe puts it, “Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house.”<sup>9</sup>

By the way, when people come for counseling they often perceive their primary problem to be a marriage breakdown, or anxiety, or some financial strain. But typically, those are fruit issues, and the root issue is a *faith* issue. It’s because the person’s faith-foundation isn’t solid that the windows in the house have cracked.

Faith is being *sure*, says the writer. That certainly is not how our society views faith. Far from being *sure*, we’re told that faith is merely your opinion in a sea of other legitimate opinions. Indeed, asserting that you know the truth that others don’t know and need to know is a totally unacceptable kind of faith.

Yet that’s the nature of biblical faith. Faith is being *sure*, and specifically being sure of *what we hope for*. The truth is...

1. *We know what is coming.* We know that Jesus the Christ is going to return to this planet. We know that eternal life awaits those who know the person of Christ. How do we know that? We know it because we have the promise of God (see 10:36-38).

And since we know what is coming...

2. *We need to live like it now.* That’s the point Hebrews is making. Faith isn’t just agreeing with some facts about Jesus. Faith produces a confident expectation of future realities.

There’s a second component...

**B. Faith involves the conviction of unseen realities.** “...and certain of what we do not see,” says the rest of verse 1. Just because you can’t see something doesn’t mean it isn’t real. Take wind, for example. You can’t see it, but who can deny its existence?

Let me give you three examples of unseen realities that we know to be absolutely certain, and we know them by faith.

1. *We know what Christ did in the past.* We know that two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born in a stable in Bethlehem, lived thirty-three years of sinless life, died on a cross in the place of sinners, rose from the dead on the third day, commissioned his followers to tell the world about Him, and then returned to heaven as a victorious Savior. Those events are unseen realities to us, but they’ve been recorded in the pages of Scripture by men who did see them. Consequently, we know what Christ did in the past.

Here’s a second unseen reality...

2. *We know what Christ will do in the future.* We know it because He announced it. “I will come back and take you to be with me (John 14:3).” “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me (Rev. 22:12).” We know what Christ did, and will do.

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<sup>7</sup> Leon Morris, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> As Leon Morris explains, “Faith is the basis, the substructure of all that the Christian life means, all that the Christian hopes for.” Leon Morris, p. 113.

<sup>9</sup> Warren Wiersbe, p. 317.

3. *We know what Christ is doing in the present.* Hear His own words, “I will build my church,” He said in Matthew 16:18. And, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” He said in Matthew 28:20.

So right now in the present, He is *with us*, working through us to build His church.

Many people today don’t understand that there is a *content* to faith. They’re like the coal miner that the great evangelist George Whitefield once met in Cornwall, England. Whitefield asked the man what he believed.

“Oh,” he said, “I believe what my church believes.”

Whitefield probed, “And what does your church believe?”

“Well,” the miner returned, “the church believes what I believe.”

Seeing that he was getting nowhere, Whitefield then asked, “What do you both believe?”

To which the man responded, “We both believe the same thing.”

That sort of content-less faith is not saving faith. The person with saving faith knows what Christ did in the past, is going to do in the future, and is doing now in the present.

Beloved, these unseen realities, and many more, are things we know. We know there is a heaven and a hell, there is sin and forgiveness, and we know these unseen things are just as real as the clothes we’re wearing and the pews we’re sitting in.

We didn’t use to know these realities because we didn’t use to have saving faith. We didn’t enter the world believing in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We entered the world cut off from Him, and blind to the unseen realities that we now cherish. But in His grace God gave to us the gift of faith (faith indeed is a gift, says Eph. 2:8-9), and so now we are sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

But what exactly is faith?<sup>10</sup> Here’s my working definition...

**C. Definition: Faith is trusting in the person of God and acting on the promises of God regardless how I feel.**

That’s what a person must do to be saved. He must trust in the person of God, namely in His Son Jesus Christ, and act on the promises of God, such as “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31),” and do so regardless how he feels.

A proud sinner never feels like humbly crying out to God for help, and more specifically, asking God’s Son to save him from his sin and the impending judgment. But when the sinner takes God at His Word, God is true to His Word. He saves the sinner and gives the sinner the gift of eternal life.

“That whosoever *believes* in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).” (see also John 1:12; Romans 1:16-17)

My friend, we are not talking about some peripheral matter. *Sola fide* is at the heart of how a sinner escapes hell and gain heaven. That’s why the first Protestants were willing to die for *sola fide*.

J. I. Packer explains, “So, where Rome had taught a piecemeal salvation, to be gained by stages through working a sacramental treadmill, the Reformers now proclaimed a unitary salvation, to be received in its entirety here and now by self-abandoning faith in God’s promise, and in the God and the Christ of that promise, as set forth in the pages of the Bible. Thus the rediscovery of the gospel brought a rediscovery of evangelism, the task of summoning non-believers to faith. Rome had said, God’s grace is great, for

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<sup>10</sup> A couple of definitions: “Faith is man’s response to what God has said.” Raymond Brown, p. 197. “True Bible faith is confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of circumstances and consequences.” Warren Wiersbe, p. 317.

through Christ's cross and his Church salvation is possible for all who will work and suffer for it; so come to church, and toil! But the Reformers said, God's grace is greater, for through Christ's cross and his Spirit salvation, full and free, with its unlimited guarantee of eternal joy, is given once and forever to all who believe; so come to Christ, and trust and take!"<sup>11</sup>

Right here is where we must begin, where the writer of Hebrews begins, with the definition of faith. But there's something else we need to consider, and that's what the writer gives us in the next thirty-nine verses.

## II. We need to carefully consider the display of faith (2-4).

Yes, we're saved sola fide. But what does true faith look like? In verses 2-4, we see it in three ways.

**A. We see it by looking at God's people in the past (2).** "This is what the ancients [lit. "the elders," *presbuteroi* in the Greek] were commended for."

In the rest of the chapter, the writer will mention eighteen examples by name of "the ancients," and a host of others by description. He wants his readers, not only to understand faith, but to *see* it.

Scan the list and you'll see a host of names: Abel, Enoch, and Noah (their stories found in Genesis 1-11); Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (their stories taken from Genesis 12-50); Moses' parents and Moses (taken from Exodus through Deuteronomy), Rahab (mentioned in Joshua), Gideon, Barak, Sampson, and Jephthah (mentioned in Judges), David and Samuel (mentioned in 1 & 2 Samuel), and the prophets.

Quite a list. The writer organizes it basically chronologically. It's worth noting who didn't make the list (he stops before he gets to such heroes as Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah; yet he does refer to some of these by description, if not by name).

What do we learn from this list? All the people on the list, though very different in terms of personality and circumstances, have some things in common, three to be precise. From the list, we learn, first of all, that...

1. *All people are sinners.* The writer didn't pick perfect people for his display of faith (or the chapter would be blank). Noah got drunk. Abraham lied. Jacob had four wives at the same time. Samson got involved with a prostitute. David had rebellious kids. The folks included in this list were what we all are. Sinners.

The list teaches us, secondly, that...

2. *All people face challenges in life.* And for the people who walked by faith in Hebrews 11, there were huge challenges. Noah built an ark. Abraham left his secure life and became a sojourner. Moses' parents broke the law and hid their baby boy.

And yet when you look carefully at the list you discover a third common element...

3. *God commends people who live, not by their feelings, but by faith.* "This is what the ancients were commended for." By faith...by faith...by faith...

The words appear again and again. When life got hard, by the grace of God these folks chose to trust in the person of God and act on the promises of God, regardless how they felt. And they call us to do the same.

So when there is true saving faith, it will show up in life in tangible ways. Sola fide doesn't mean, as it's been accused, that good works don't matter. They do. They are the evidence that faith is real. But the only work that saves a sinner is *Christ's* work, not ours.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/sola-fide-the-reformed-doctrine-of-justification/>

The writer gives a second display of faith in verse 3, one that includes the readers. He says, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

Do you want to see faith? The writer says...

**B. We see it by affirming the creation account (3).** By faith *we understand*, he says. There’s something that we know, we, the first century readers and by application *us*. What do we know? We know that God created the universe. It didn’t just come into being. It’s not here as the result of natural causes. It was “formed” (Greek *katartidzo*, to complete, prepare, create) at God’s command (literally, “by the word of God”).

More specifically, the writer says that what we *see* today (the physical stuff of the universe) was not made out of what was visible. In other words, contrary to a fundamental tenet of evolution, there was no preexisting matter that became the building blocks of the universe as we know it. There was *nothing*, then God spoke, and by the power of His Word this wonderfully developed universe came into existence.

Of course, if you want to see the details of how He did it, read Genesis 1. He took six days, on each day *He spoke* into existence another facet of His creation.

Now how do we know that? The writer says it is *by faith*. We cannot prove the creation account. That’s not to say there isn’t evidence for it, but in the end, since we weren’t there, we can’t prove what happened on the first six days of this universe. We affirm it *by faith*.

By the way, any explanation of how the universe came into existence, and that includes evolution, is faith-based. Since none of us were there, none of us can prove what happened.

Yet we do know what happened, and we know it because we have the record of the only person who was there. Think of it this way...

1. *Faith is not believing something in spite of the facts.*

2. *Faith is believing the account of the One who knows all the facts.* And the One who knows the facts says this in His Word, John 1:3, “Through him [referring to Christ] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

I appreciate John Calvin’s assessment in his commentary on verse 3. “We are no different from brutish beasts if we do not understand that the world was made by God. Why are men endowed with reason and intellect except for the purpose of recognizing their Creator?”<sup>12</sup>

Leon Morris writes, “For the author the visible universe is not sufficient to account for itself. But it is faith, not something material, that assures him that it originated with God. His view is nonetheless certain because it is based on faith, and he does not qualify his statement as though any doubt were possible. This is God’s world, and faith assures him that God originated it.”<sup>13</sup>

When a person affirms the creation account, he’s putting faith on display. When a high school sophomore hears the snickers of his biology teacher and classmates, yet affirms, “I don’t agree with your theory that human beings, with all of the amazing complexities of their makeup, have evolved from primeval chemicals. I choose to believe the historical account of the Creator Himself who says in His Word, ‘The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath

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<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, pp. 158-9.

<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris, p. 114.

of life, and the man became a living being (Gen. 2:7),” that sophomore is putting faith on display.

When it comes to the creation account, are you putting faith on display?

“Well, it’s complicated,” you say. “The scientists disagree.”

My friend, listen again to Hebrews 11:3. It’s *by faith*. The evolutionists weren’t there, and neither were we. The question is, will we or will we not put our trust in the person and words of the Living God, regardless how we feel? I invite you to join the ranks of God’s people in Hebrews 11 and put your faith on display.

Now, thirdly, we come to what the seventeenth century Puritan, Richard Sibbes, called, “a little book of martyrs.”<sup>14</sup> According to verse 4 we see faith displayed...

**C. We see it by looking at Abel (4).** “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.”

Cain and Abel, of course, were brothers, the sons of Adam and Eve. They never knew the paradise their parents knew and forfeited, for sin entered the world in Genesis 3, and these brothers were born into the post-Genesis 3 world of Genesis 4.

We learn five things about Abel in verse 4.

1. *He saw himself as an unworthy sinner.* That’s why he offered God a sacrifice. He heard the story from his parents. He knew that God created them, but that their sin had alienated them, and all their descendants, from Him.

But Abel knew his problem wasn’t merely his parents’ sin. It was his own sinful disposition that he inherited from his parents, and his own sinful choices that resulted from that disposition. That’s why Abel brought his offering to God, because he saw himself as an unworthy sinner.

“But Cain brought an offering, too,” you say. “Did he see himself as an unworthy sinner?”

No, Cain did not. That’s apparent by God’s assessment of his condition, “Sin is crouching at your door (Gen 4:7),” and Cain’s bitter response to God’s assessment. He *killed* his brother.

I know it for another reason. In Psalm 51:17 David said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” So if God accepts the sacrifices of a person with a contrite heart, what does that say to us about Cain? If Cain had possessed a contrite heart, God would have accepted his sacrifice. But Cain didn’t, unlike his brother, and so God didn’t.

We learn something else about Abel. Unlike Cain...

2. *He approached God on the basis of mercy, not merit.* He offered God a “better sacrifice” than Cain, literally a “*more* sacrifice” (*pleiona thusian*). It’s the same word we find in Matthew 5:20 where Jesus says a person’s righteousness must *exceed* that of the Pharisees if he’s to enter the kingdom of God. It’s also used to say that the widow’s two mites were *more* than the offerings given by the rich (Luke 21:3).<sup>15</sup>

What made Abel’s sacrifice better? Genesis 4 tells us that Cain worked the soil and offered God “the fruits of the soil,” whereas Abel kept flocks and “brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock (verses 3-4).” So perhaps Abel’s offering was better because of *what* he offered—his offering required the death of a substitute and was a bloody offering, and we know from Leviticus 17:11 that it is “the blood that makes an

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<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from Raymond Brown, p. 199.

<sup>15</sup> Explanation by Robert Gromacki, p. 184.

atonement for the soul.” Cain simply offered produce to God, no blood, no death of a substitute involved.

I say *perhaps* because the text doesn’t specify that Abel’s offering was better because of *what* he offered. But it does highlight *how* he offered it.

By faith. “*By faith* Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.” Abel presented his offering to God *by faith*, the assumption being that Cain did not.

Abel saw himself as an unworthy sinner. He agreed with what God told his parents in Genesis 3. He agreed that sin separates the sinner from God. He agreed that he could not come to God on the basis of his own merit. So he approached God on the basis of mercy. He’d heard the story of how God had killed animals to cover his parents’ guilt, shame, and nakedness. So he killed an animal and presented it to God, and he offered it *by faith*.

But Cain did not come by faith. He didn’t think he needed to, for he saw himself as a worthy sort of fellow. Sure, he brought God an offering, because that’s what good guys do. They do religious things to show God (and themselves, and others who may be watching) that they’re serious about being right with God. But they do it on their terms, not His, trusting in their merit, at least in part, rather than on His mercy alone.

May I say that churches this morning are filled with people just like Cain, good people, giving people, upstanding people? That’s why they’ve come to church, because that’s what “good people” do. They refuse to agree with God’s Word that their good works are as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6), and that “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10).

Beloved, there’s only one person whose merit entitles Him to walk into the presence of God, and that’s the One who lived a perfect life. The rest of us must approach God on the basis of *mercy*, not merit, or to put it another way, *by faith* in His merit.

Now notice what happened to Abel.

3. *He received God’s commendation for his actions.* “By faith he was commended as a righteous man.” God commended Abel, not because of his works but his *faith*. That’s always God’s way.

“By grace are you saved *through faith*, not by works (Eph. 2:8).”

Centuries ago Gregory the Great put it this way, “It is obvious that it was not the offerer who received approval because of the offerings but the offerings because of the offerer.”<sup>16</sup>

4. *He eventually died, but he still is speaking to us.* “And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.”

But wait. Abel’s dead, for Cain killed him cold-blooded. How’s he still speaking? He may have died, but people who embrace *sola fide* don’t cease to exist. They may leave this world, perhaps early from our perspective, but they leave behind a message the rest of us can still hear.

We lost a wonderful brother this past week, and he was only 34 years old. Nabeel Qureshi was raised as a devout Muslim, until God gave him a Christian friend in college named David who introduced him to the true Jesus. That led to several years of intense, soul-shaking searching of the Bible, and a reevaluation of his own faith.

I read his first book and shared it with you a couple of years ago, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. After putting his faith in Jesus Christ, Nabeel finished medical school, pursued a master’s degree in religion, and entered a PhD program at Oxford University in

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<sup>16</sup> Quote taken from Philip Hughes, p. 454.

New Testament studies. In 2013, he became a Christian apologist with Ravi Zacharias International Ministry.

Three days ago Ravi Zacharias gave the eulogy for his young protégé. “He was a thorough-going evangelical. He held dear the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and carried the message of salvation. Jesus’ grace for a transformed heart was his message. For years as a young man, he labored and struggled to gain “righteousness before God” only to find out that righteousness was already met in the cross through Jesus Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

So today, Nabeel, like Abel, is still speaking. Indeed, he’s speaking to us. And what is he saying?

5. *He tells us we need to be people who live by faith.* Sometimes when you live by faith, you get killed, like Abel did. But you also get commended by the One whose assessment alone matters, just like Abel did. Listen to Abel this morning. Our greatest need is to be people who live and die embracing *sola fide*.

*My faith has found a resting place,  
Not in device nor creed;  
I trust the Ever-living One,  
His wounds for me shall plead.*

*Enough for me that Jesus saves,  
This ends my fear and doubt;  
A sinful soul I come to Him,  
He’ll never cast me out.*

*My heart is leaning on the Word,  
The written Word of God,  
Salvation by my Savior’s name,  
Salvation through His blood.*

*My great Physician heals the sick,  
The lost He came to save;  
For me His precious blood He shed,  
For me His life He gave.*

*I need no other argument,  
I need no other plea;  
It is enough that Jesus died,  
And that He died for me.<sup>18</sup>*

Make It Personal: Where is the resting place for your faith?

Make sure it is Christ alone.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/september-web-only/ravi-zacharias-nabeel-qureshi-apologist-rzim.html>

<sup>18</sup> My Faith Has Found a Resting Place, by Eliza E. Hewitt

**Supplemental Material:**

I do not want to misrepresent what others believe. The stakes are too high. So I have included here the following statements from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:<sup>19</sup>

“1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation.”

“1257 ...Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.”

“2019 Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man.”

“2020 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God's mercy.”

“2027 No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.”

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P72.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P72.HTM)