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*The heart of the giver makes
the gift dear and precious.*

— MARTIN LUTHER



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EVANTELL'S

FALL 2017

THE REFORMATION'S IMPACT ON OUR EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS

By David Souther
President, EvanTell

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Perhaps the most well-known doctrines that the reformation emphasized are the five solae (often referred to as "solae"), literally meaning "alone." What significance does each sola have to evangelism today?

SOLA SCRIPTURA (Scripture alone)

This doctrine teaches that the Bible alone is our highest source of authority. This doesn't mean church tradition holds no importance, but rather that the infallible Word of God is the benchmark by which all other faith matters are evaluated. For our evangelism efforts, this means that our words must primarily flow from the Bible, not from church tradition or a system of philosophy or logic. When we present the gospel, our presentation should be saturated with Scripture. The power of the gospel is found in God's words, not ours.

SOLA GRATIA (Grace alone)

Grace refers to undeserved favor from God which cannot be earned. It is only because of God's favor that He saves anyone. God rescues people from the penalty of their sin (eternal separation from Him) because He chose to, not because He sees any goodness or merit in us or even the potential for goodness or merit. Salvation is not a partnership or cooperative effort. It is God doing 100% of the saving.

SOLA FIDE (Faith alone)

We are saved through faith alone in Christ alone. This means that we bring nothing to our salvation except trusting in Jesus. As an old hymn says, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling." No amount of good works or intentions, religious rituals or pedigree can help a sinner take even one step toward heaven. Our goal in evangelism is for the listener to trust in Christ alone.

SOLUS CHRISTUS (Christ alone)

This truth centers around the fact that salvation is found in Christ alone: "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Evangelism is about lifting up Jesus' name and inviting people to come to Him by faith. We invite people to trust in a person, not religion, not "Judeo Christian" values, not even a set of propositions. Only Christ saves.

SOLI DEO GLORIA (Glory to God alone)

This fifth sola emphasizes that the glory for our salvation belongs to God alone. If we have the privilege of seeing someone trust Christ after explaining the gospel to them, we should be careful to give God all the glory and credit. Just as a farmer can take no credit for a seed bursting forth with life, we have no control whatsoever over whether a person comes to faith. Our job is simply to deliver the gospel message and leave the results in God's hands. As the hymn says, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."



Reformation TIMELINE

1505

Luther joins Augustinian monastery

1510

Luther witnesses poor spiritual state of church in Rome

1512

Luther begins teaching at University at Wittenberg (lectures on Psalms, Romans, & Galatians)

October 31, 1517

Luther posts 95 Theses, listing his grievances with the church

April 1521

Luther delivers his famous "Here I Stand Speech" at the Diet of Worms

October 31, 2017

500th Year Anniversary of the Reformation

The Key Verse of the Reformation

By Sarah Bowler
Communications Manager

ROMANS 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The biblical phrase "the just shall live by faith" first occurs in the Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4), where it describes the marked contrast between those who perpetrate injustice (in this passage the Babylonians) and the righteous who live by their faithfulness. It later becomes a key phrase in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul quoted it twice (Rom. 1:16–17 and Gal. 3:11) in a spiritual sense to show the crucial point of salvation through faith. The author of Hebrews quoted this verse when talking about the perseverance of believers under hardship (10:37–38). Notably, these verses help introduce what has commonly come to be called "the Faith Chapter" (ch. 11).

Fast forward a few hundred years, and one notes the powerful influence of these words during the Reformation.

Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, approached his monastic life with zeal. He practiced extreme forms of asceticism, including: fasting, long confessional prayers, scourging himself, and sleeping without a blanket in frigid conditions.

Yet, despite his actions, he confessed he did not love God, but rather saw Him as an angry tyrant who demanded justice. Luther keenly felt his own sinful shortcomings. After all, who could compete with a perfectly righteous and holy God?

Around 1512, Luther began lecturing at the University of Wittenberg on books of the Bible such as Psalms, Romans, and Galatians. As he studied Scripture, in particular Romans 1:17, Luther made a startling and life changing discovery:

"I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith....I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates" (from Luther's "Preface to the Latin Writings").

At that time, it was commonly taught in the church that justification meant God "makes" sinful people righteous. However, the New Testament's use of the word is best defined "to declare as righteous." This may seem like a subtle difference, but the implications are enormous.

As Luther realized, eternal salvation isn't about our own righteousness but Christ's. We do nothing to earn it. No amount of fasting or participating in church sacraments puts us in a better position before God. Our righteousness is solely based on Christ's performance, not ours. God doesn't "make" us righteous; He "declares" us righteous on account of Christ's saving work on our behalf.

Our faulty attempts at keeping the law cannot save us: "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

The idea from Romans that "the just shall live by faith" became a guiding principle of the Reformation and provides the framework by which we understand saving faith today: Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

THE REFORMATION and EVANGELISM'S INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

Many of the Biblical truths arising from the Reformation are still producing fruit around the world. EvanTell's emphasis on God's grace and mercy in Christ contrasts sharply with the worldview of other religions.

We are privileged to partner with hundreds of churches and ministries around the world to share the good news of God's grace:

Northern Africa

"One of our evangelists has used EvanTell to reach out to Muslims. His church has seen 11,000 Muslims converted to Christianity over the past four years and they have established 46 churches of converted Muslims in a Northern state. Praise God and PRAY for these new converts who face death as 'heretics' in Islam."

—EvanTell Certified Instructor

Europe & South America

EvanTell is reaching nations steeped in "Christian" tradition, yet needing the gospel of grace. EvanTell instructors Paul Harkness in Germany, Paul Meehan in Hungary, and Master Instructor Roberto De Lucia in Brazil are not only sharing Christ to many, but also training believers to do the same each year.

"We visit 11 prisons where we lead hymn singing, skits, and the preaching of the Word. Many hundreds heard the Word and received gospel literature. Everywhere we go, we give out the tract, 'May I Ask You A Question?' This tract shares the gospel in a clear and precise manner. We have distributed thousands of this tract in the prisons, the streets of Budapest, churches, schools, and in other places where the LORD has opened doors."

—Paul Meehan, EvanTell Certified Instructor

Southeast Asia

"Our ministry focuses on training pastors. The first 2 things we teach them are the absolute authority of the Bible and that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Each session we discover that many of the pastors who attend for the first time are not even saved because they are depending on their works to get them to heaven in addition to the work of Christ."

Therefore, EvanTell's training is not only great for training believers in evangelism, but also wonderful for making the gospel clear for those in church leadership who think they are saved but are not. We find that the people who come to Christ during the training are some of our most fervent evangelists!"

—EvanTell Master Certified Instructor