

94 Sola fide II – more pre-flight checks

Here it is again – what I got when googled ‘sola fide’ (my emphasis):

Sola fide, which means ‘faith alone,’ is important because it is one of the distinguishing characteristics or key points that separate the **true biblical Gospel** from false gospels. **At stake is the very Gospel itself and it is therefore a matter of eternal life or death.** Getting the Gospel right is of such importance that the Apostle Paul would write in Galatians 1:9, ‘As we have already said, so now I say again: **If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!**’ Paul was addressing the same question that sola fide addresses—on what basis is man declared by God to be justified? Is it by faith alone or by faith combined with works? Paul makes it clear in Galatians and Romans that man is ‘justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law’ (Galatians 2:16), and the rest of the Bible concurs.

Then go back a step to the less confrontational Wikipedia definition:

Sola fide, also known as justification by faith alone, is a Christian theological doctrine commonly held to distinguish many Protestant churches from the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches

And then back to what Paul says:

*I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a **righteousness** from God is revealed, a righteousness that is **by faith from first to last**, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

Rm 1:16,17.

What has God been trying to drum into Paul Beverley? ‘You stupid boy!’ (God has been saying, lovingly!) ‘It’s not about being right! It’s about trusting me, having faith, going on your journey into the unknown, with me beside you.’

And the other thing God has been saying to me – very strongly and from all sorts of aspects – is the importance of community, e.g. there’s no ‘I’ in the Lord’s prayer. ‘You mustn’t go on that journey alone; you may not entirely agree with the people around you, but you must accept one another for who you are.’

Can you see, therefore, why I find that first quote is so awful? First of all – and ironically – it’s not actually about faith; it’s about fear: get it wrong and you’re in real trouble! Second it’s about being right: there is only one ‘true biblical Gospel’ (i.e. the writer’s interpretation of it). Third, that ‘Gospel’ is about how I, as an individual, can be saved: remember the ‘gospel-based’ website I quoted [6]: ‘Leave everybody out of it; it’s between you and God’.

Whether penal substitution is right or wrong is no longer an issue for me; if you find it a helpful way to look at what Jesus achieved on the cross then that's fine by me. But the view of the gospel that Romans gives us is so much bigger and more wonderful – panoramic, even; I can't wait to get the flight started! Maybe the drone will get to take off tomorrow.

Paul Bev. 14.12.19