

FAITH ALONE

Romans 4–5

Evan Johnson | Sunday 14 June 2026 | 9AM Gawler

Big Idea: *Salvation depends entirely on Christ's work, not our own. The righteousness of Jesus is given the moment we believe - not earned, not gradual, not measured by our good versus our bad. As soon as you believe, it is yours.*

Introduction - A Dangerous Truth

In 1555 and 1556 in Oxford, three English ministers - Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley - were burned at the stake for believing what this message is about. They are remembered today in the children's nursery rhyme Three Blind Mice - the 'farmer's wife' being Queen Mary I, and having their 'tails cut off' a euphemism for their execution.

What they believed and preached was the soul sufficiency of Christ - sola Christo in Latin. The idea that our salvation depends entirely on Jesus' work and not on our own. That we cannot buy our way into heaven, and we cannot top up our salvation with enough good works.

This was the heart of the Reformation, summed up in five Latin phrases:

SOLA FIDE

Faith alone

SOLA GRATIA

Grace alone

SOLA SCRIPTURA

Scripture alone

SOLO CHRISTO

Christ alone

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Glory to God alone

Up until that point, the church taught that people could buy an 'indulgence' to fast-track their way into heaven, or pay monks and ministers to keep praying for their soul after death. Martin Luther and these men realised that salvation is in Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, depending on Scripture alone, with glory to God alone.

Queen Mary did not want preachers telling people they didn't need to keep paying the church. It took away the church's power and income. These men could have recanted and lived - but they held to what they believed, and it cost them their lives.

Picking Up From Last Week

Last week, Pastor Andrew left us in the courtroom scene - all of us in the dock before a pure and holy God, in trouble with a sin problem. But now God reveals a righteousness that comes from him, apart from the law - and we receive that righteousness by faith, by believing.

Reading Through Romans 4–5

Romans 4:1–3 *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about - but not before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'*

Paul is quoting directly from Genesis 15:6. The idea that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness is foundational to everything Paul argues about faith and salvation.

Romans 4:4–5 *Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.*

Romans 5:1–2 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

Notice - grace, faith, access, glory to God. The whole Reformation rallying cry is in that one verse.

Romans 5:6–8 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

If you only ever learn two or three verses of the Bible by heart, make them these. We were in trouble - and it was while we were in trouble that Christ died for us.

1 | The Real Sin Problem

Romans 5:15–17 *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man (Adam), how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

Paul is referring back to Adam and Abraham - creation and the fall, and then how Abraham was reconciled with God through faith. Adam and Eve were created in perfect union with God, in total communion. When they chose to rebel, sin entered the world and the whole of creation broke.

The sin problem is not your good deeds versus your bad deeds. It is not about your works. It is about our nature as created but fallen beings.

We are not weighing good against bad on a scale. We are trapped inside a broken system - cut off from God by our fallen nature. That nature has to be dealt with, not balanced out. The only way to be restored to perfect union with God is if someone from outside the broken system comes in and restores it.

Jesus comes from heaven to earth - from outside the fallen system - to restore us. He lives as a man inside it, picks us up, and restores us because he comes from outside it and can change it.

The trespass was devastating - it doomed creation to be cut off from God. But how much greater is the gift that comes after it - the gift of Jesus' death and resurrection - that restores us and brings us into full communion with God.

Our status before God is changed because of the righteousness of Jesus. It is reckoned to be ours when we believe. We stand before a holy, perfect God with the same right to be there as Jesus does.

You didn't get there by your actions - so you can't undo it by your actions either. You didn't get this because you were good enough - so you can't lose it because you're bad enough. You got it because you believed. So keep on believing.

Reflect: *Have you ever thought of your salvation as a ledger - your good deeds versus your bad deeds? How does it change things to understand the problem is your nature, not your record - and that Jesus restores your nature, not your score?*

2 | Salvation Is Given the Moment You Believe

Romans 3:22 and elsewhere - as you believe, the righteousness of Christ is given to you. There is no delay, no slow dawning, no percentage. You are either saved or you are not.

Your experience of coming to faith may feel gradual - investigating, drawing near slowly over time - but the moment of salvation itself is not gradual. As soon as you believe, you become a partaker in the divine nature and a participant in the kingdom of God.

You can't be both saved and not saved. There are no gradual shades of grey. The righteousness of Christ is given the moment you believe.

We may not always be aware of exactly when that moment of belief occurred. There may be people in heaven who don't realise they're going to be there - and certainly people we don't expect to be there, because they have believed.

How Much Faith Do We Need?

Faith is binary - it is either there or it is not, like a one or a zero. There is no amount you need to scrape together. You don't gather up your faith and present it to God as something you've worked hard on. As long as the spark of faith is there at all, that is what you need.

This doesn't go away if you have a bad week and start doubting. The justification of Jesus Christ is given the moment you believe - it doesn't get withdrawn later because questions come.

Reflect: *If you have ever wondered whether your faith is 'enough,' sit with this: as long as the spark is there, it is there. You don't need to scrape together more. Be reassured.*

3 | What Kind of Faith Is Effective?

What does it actually mean to 'believe in Jesus'? Demons knew exactly who Jesus was when he confronted them - 'Son of God, are you going to cast me into hell?' - yet they are not saved. They know about Jesus, but they don't have faith in him.

James 2:14–24 *Faith without deeds is dead... our faith is shown by our actions.*

This isn't about being saved by deeds - it's that saving faith results in action. If you genuinely believed there was a bomb under the stage about to go off, you would act and leave. If you genuinely believed there was treasure in the next room, you would get up and go get it. Real faith moves you.

But believing in something untrue - like believing paying money to the church saves you - sincerely held belief in the wrong thing is not effective for salvation. So what is effective saving faith?

Romans 4:20–22 *Yet he (Abraham) did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness.*

Saving faith is being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what he says.

What has God said? That he will save you from your sins. That he has power over life and death. That he is the way, the truth, and the life. That no one comes to the Father except through him. Are you fully persuaded that God will do what he says?

That is concrete. That is something you can latch onto - believing Jesus has the power to do what he said he would do. If you believe that, it is credited to you as righteousness.

Trust, Not Performance

We can't impress God with our time, our gifts, or our stuff - he doesn't need any of that. The only thing God says he wants from us is our trust, our obedience, our faith. If we trust him and believe, obedience follows naturally.

If you want to impress God, then trust him. All we have to bring to God is faith - and thank God, that is all we need.

Conclusion

Keep praying for the names you wrote down last week. All they need is that spark of faith - that moment of belief. Once that happens, discipleship and growth can follow. But the spark has to be born in their heart first.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. Evan said the sin problem is not your good deeds versus your bad deeds, but your nature as a fallen being. How does this differ from how you've usually thought about sin and salvation?
2. Romans 5:6–8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners - not after we cleaned ourselves up. Does this change how you think about your own worthiness before coming to God?
3. Evan said salvation is binary - either you believe or you don't, with no gradual shades of grey. Have you ever doubted your salvation because of a bad week or unanswered questions? How does this teaching speak to that?
4. Demons know about Jesus but don't have saving faith. What is the difference between knowing facts about Jesus and having faith that is 'fully persuaded' of his power to do what he says?
5. Abraham was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he promised. What specific promise of God are you currently being asked to be fully persuaded about?
6. Are you still praying for the name you wrote down in Week 1? What would it look like to pray for that person again this week, specifically asking for the spark of faith to be born in their heart?

Key Scriptures This Week

- Romans 4:1–5 - Abraham believed God; credited as righteousness
- Romans 5:1–2 - Justified through faith; access by faith into grace
- Romans 5:6–8 - Christ died for us while we were still sinners
- Romans 5:15–17 - The gift is not like the trespass; Adam and Christ
- Romans 3:22 - The righteousness of Christ given as you believe
- Romans 4:20–22 - Abraham fully persuaded of God's power to keep his promise
- James 2:14–24 - Faith shown by action
- Genesis 15:6 - Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness

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