

**Title:** The Moment I Responded in Faith

**Big Idea:**

**Text:** Eph. 2:5 "...by grace you have been saved THROUGH FAITH"

**Introduction (Imagine...):**

*Imagine a contractor you don't know without you knowing and without your permission begins building **YOU THE HOUSE** of your dreams with His own funds. Media room. Indoor pool. Kitchen with dual ovens. Tons of counter space...of course granite counters. Fireplace in the bedroom. Jacuzzi tub and flatscreen. Game room for the kids complete with PS3 and Wii. No Xbox that is from Microsoft.. Great room for lots of people to gather.*

*Imagine encircling around you are **ALL THOSE PEOPLE YOU LOVE** and want to share life, but not too accessible. Grandkids, lifelong friends, college buddies. Perhaps no in-laws or ex-bosses.*

*Imagine you granted a **JOB** that fits your life and lifestyle. A job designed around your personality, fits within your schedule schedule, gives you sense of mission and purpose, wonderful partnering personnel and intelligent structure and generous, very generous compensation package with outstanding benefits.*

*Imagine all this coming from someone who has a great interest in you and hope you will someday have some interest in them. This person cares about every detail of life, but is most concerned **YOUR STRUGGLE** - a struggle He knows you will never will win and will eventually do you under and harm those who love around you. A struggle you minimize, debate and for all practical purposes ignore.*

*Imagine yourself **BEFORE A JUDGE** for crime you reluctantly agree you committed. You try to approach the bench to plea your case, but you are forbidden. You are shocked that someone actually kept track **NOT ONLY** of your offenses, but of all **YOUR ATTITUDES** and **THOUGHTS**. Every attempt to explain each offense is*

*disregarded because this judge can and does see YOUR MOTIVES. To make matters worse, He judges you with the same standards you have judged others. You find you have no foot to stand on. You can't say He wasn't fair. After all, he simply used your own standard of justice against you.*

*Imagine yourself **IN PRISON** for a crime you reluctantly agree you committed, but you strongly disagree with the penalty. Compared to everyone else, your offenses seem petty, but everyone in the cells next to you is also facing the death penalty. You can't believe your "sins" are a capital offense. You find yourself sitting on death row - shocked, angry, scared and bewildered.*

*Imagine hearing your name called. It is your time to die for your offenses. You still can't believe this is happening, but you walk forward with your head down. In the execution chamber is that Judge who convicted and condemned you. Your death is both painful and public. Your heart races at you realize the fate that is before you. You wonder if there is any other way? Is there any hope at all?*

*Suddenly, a person you do not know, but looks somewhat like the judge, but younger, steps up to the executioner and submits himself for your penalty. You are relieved at the reprieve, but aghast at what happens to this stranger who steps into your place. He is beaten for your lies. He is mocked for your insults. He is scourged for those you cursed. He is nailed to a piece of wood for your godless life.*

### ***How are you to respond?***

Today, on Palm Sunday, we talk about our response to God called "Faith". For the past two weeks the focus has been on God's love (His motive) and God's grace (His method). This week the spotlight turns back to us. God has done His part. Rather than condemn and banish you and I, God saved us. **It is now your move.**

**Text:**

This is perhaps **THE MOST IMPORTANT doctrinal statement** in all of Scripture.

<u>Eph. 2:8</u> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;	(positive) (negative) (positive)
<u>Eph. 2:9</u> not as a result of works, that no one should boast.	(negative)

**Salvation Summary:**

1. **SALVATION is entirely motivated in God's mercy and kindness not in anything in mankind himself.** Man deserves nothing at all. Rather, than bring justice and be fair giving us what we deserve, He extends forgiveness and pardon.
2. **GRACE, though free to man, is costly for God. His Son, Jesus must die a horrible death to pay for mankind's sins.** Grace is God's "high road" response to mankind's rebellion. God not only gives to him liberally, but showers upon him exceeding riches of His grace. **The way we understand Grace is how we forgive others.**
3. **FAITH is our natural response to God's gracious offer to us in Christ Jesus.** It is trusting, not trying, what God did through Jesus.

Faith is **TRUSTING**, not **TRYING**.

**GRACE is God's free and undeserved mercy towards us in Christ Jesus and FAITH is trusting in THE CHARACER and THE WORK of God in Christ.**

**Faith** trusts in the character of God (we appeal to God's mercy, kindness and promises not our merit or our diligence)

Faith trusts in the work of God (because Jesus died on the cross, you tell us there is healing for our body, soundness of mind, peace in my heart).

\*\*\*Josh's story\*\*\*

## What is FAITH?

### Faith is a GIFT:

We must never think of salvation as some form of TRANSACTION WHERE GOD PROVIDES GRACE and WE PROVIDE FAITH. Remember, the text says that we were FIRST dead in our sins and had to be quickened or made alive by God BEFORE we could believe (Eph 2:4). Given this sequence, it shows that faith, or the ability to believe and trust, itself is something that comes from God. Besides grace, saving faith is too a gift from God.

Phil. 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

### Faith is NOT a work:

Because of this, faith is NOT an ACHIEVEMENT (not your own doing) NOR REWARD for any of your deeds of religion or philanthropy (not because of works). Salvation is NOT in any sense God's response to anything in us. Man deserves nothing at all. God not only gives to him liberally, but showers upon him exceeding riches of His grace and gives us the ability to believe. Since there is no room for human merit, there is no room for boasting.

### Faith is NOT a contract (it's really a covenant):

Faith is a flimsy way to do any serious agreement: Faith is perhaps the worst way to do any business transaction. Because the terms of salvation is not written down with witnesses, faith is fuzzy. Faith is invisible. Faith can be manipulated or coerced.

God commits Himself to us BEFORE we ever know Him. God makes us alive. God gives us the ability to believe and trust. Only then we respond if faith.

God seeing how flimsy our character and conduct is realizes this is a bad foundation for any relationship. Rather than put the foundation of salvation on man's decision, He puts it on His character (mercy, grace and kindness) and His work (what Jesus did on the cross).

**Faith is FACT BASED, but not FACT FILLED.**

Faith has SEEN and UNSEEN, KNOWN and UNKNOWN aspects to it. Faith is not BLIND as some have allegedly and often boasted in. I have heard many say, "***Just believe and ignore the facts.***" Hogwash. Faith is always rooted in some form of evidence. The Christian faith is rooted in the historic reality that there was a man named Jesus Christ. He was born in the Middle East. His teachings are some of the most revered words in the world. We have extrabiblical facts that attest to His miracles, His death and even materials outside the Bible that attest to His resurrection. It is naïve to say Jesus did not exist. The reality is WHO is he.

*C.S. Lewis, a popular British theologian, continues, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, The MacMillan Company, 1960, pp. 40-41.)*

**Faith is the ONLY bridge to receive Salvation:**

The object of faith is Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is the ONLY bridge to God. It is not what we do, but what He has done. It is not us trying harder, it is us trusting more. It is not anything we do; it is everything He has done.

**Faith does NOT save. Christ saves.**

God's love is the cause of salvation. Christ is the means of salvation. Faith is simply our response to God's generous offer. Faith is but the instrument that through which salvation comes to me. It is the medium by which God brings His salvation to us in Christ.

We must be careful to NOT say that my believing saves us. Belief does not save. Faith does not save. Christ saves. Christ and His finished work. Not my belief, not my faith, not my understanding, not my obedience, nothing I do. "Not of ourselves." "Not of boasting".

## **FAITH puts our trust in God, not in our DECISION.**

I realize this may be splitting hairs, but I do believe we need to talk a bit about **how we tell our faith stories**. Everyone here has a faith story. You may never have shared it and you yet to find Jesus as the central part of it.

Most faith stories have a three components:

- 1) **Life before Christ** where people describe being caught up in vices like addiction, anger, insecurity, and the like.
- 2) **Life after Christ**, where we honestly, not exaggerate for that is a form of lying, tell people what Jesus has done for this particular area like bring hope, healing, strength and peace.
- 3) Between these two points is the **hinge phrase**.

Often times I hear phrases like, “Then I **made a decision** for Christ 30 years ago”, “Then I **choose** to believe” or “Then I **made a change**”. My concern with these phrases is that it puts the emphasis on **my ability, my will and my determination**. The focus of the hinge phrase is on **me and my will, my strength and my ability**. **That is NOT how Paul describes way of describing how one becomes a Christian**. **The emphasis is in the wrong place**. It not what I decided, but something God has **done in me**.

What happens when that season where we feel weak, storms come in, we can't see God or feel Him, and our decision for God comes into question? We become fertile ground for thoughts from the enemy that causes us to stumble and doubt our ability to perseverance and keep up our decision.

The **CORRECT** way to tell our story is to:

- 1) **Life before Christ** where people describe being caught up in vices like addiction, anger, insecurity, and the like.
- 2) **Life after Christ**, where we honestly, not exaggerate for that is a form of lying, tell people what Jesus has done for this particular area like bring hope, healing, strength and peace.
- 3) Between these two points is the **hinge phrase...BUT GOD**

BUT GOD...puts the emphasis WHERE IT BELONGS. This is how life was before Christ, BUT GOD came in and changed my life. God touched my anger. God granted me peace. God changed my heart. God restored my relationship to my wife.

God is the hero of salvation. He sought you out. It is not our decision that makes us a Christian. That is our work.

**“Come discover God’s story in you.”**

Yes, people may ask, “Well how did God do that for you?” You can then tell them how you responded to God’s gracious offer in Christ by placing your trust in Christ. But when you tell the story, I suggest you make sure you ensure God is the hero, not your decision. But God...

**FAITH believes Christ's work alone is SUFFICIENT.**

I bring up this point, because I have seen it in numerous fashions in people in the church. They have put their trust in Christ's work on the cross, know God has forgiven them, **BUT THEY DO NOT FORGIVE THEMSELVES.** They still feel the need to **punish themselves to show their sincerity, their remorse or their allegiance to God.** They believe they must show ongoing contrition, resist all pleasures and at times chastise themselves to show how much they are seeking God. They repeatedly bring up past failures,

When we do this we are essentially saying that **what God did in Christ on the cross was not good enough.** I must **ADD to Christ's work on the cross a trust sense of guilt, shame, perhaps penance.**

FAITH trusts the sufficiency of Christ. Sola fida. Faith alone.

\*\*\*Communion\*\*\*



DARKNESS  
GRIEF  
ANGER  
BETRAYAL  
ACCUSATION  
PAIN  
FAILURE  
JUDGMENT  
GUILT  
ISOLATION  
REJECTION  
CONFUSION  
FRUSTRATION  
INJUSTICE  
UNTRUST  
INSECURITY  
GRATITUDE

# BUT GOD

the moment B.C. became A.D.

7

# FAITH IS...

trusting

# NOT

trying



8

# FAITH IS...

1. Faith is a **GIFT** (Phil 1:29, Acts 18:27).
2. Faith is **NOT** a **WORK**.
3. Faith is **NOT** a **CONTRACT**.
4. Faith is **FACT BASED**, but **NOT FACT FILLED**.
5. Faith is the **ONLY BRIDGE** to receive salvation in Jesus Christ.
6. Faith does not save. **CHRIST SAVES**.

9

SOLA FIDA

# FAITH ALONE

Faith puts our trust in God, not in our **DECISION**.



10

COME DISCOVER

# God's Story

IN YOU

VALLEYCHRISTIAN

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WE'D LOVE TO MEET YOU!  
 Sunday Worship Services | 8:30 & 11:15 AM | Family Learning Hour | 10:00 AM  
 Mid-Week Classes | Wednesdays at 7:00 PM  
 Visit our website for a list of all scheduled events.

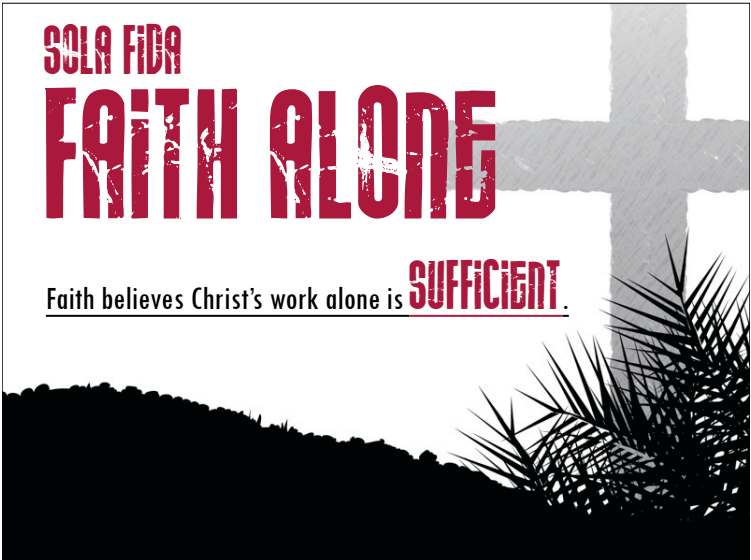


11

SOLA FIDA

# FAITH ALONE

Faith believes Christ's work alone is **SUFFICIENT**.



12

