



What is a Protestant? #4

Faith Alone

Union Church
November 2023

Introduction

Review of last session: Grace alone

The “5 Solas” of the Protestant Reformation

Sola Scriptura	Scripture Alone
Sola Gratia	Grace alone
Sola Fide	Faith Alone
Solus Christus	Christ Alone
Soli Deo Gloria	Glory to God Alone

Principle #3 Faith Alone

The situation in Luther’s Day:

Burning question: “How can sinners be made right with a holy God?”

Rome’s response

The sacraments

Access to the Treasury of Merit granted through indulgences

The rediscoveries of the Protestant Reformation

Basically, the gospel was rediscovered

Romans 1:17

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 3:28

Romans 4:3-5

Romans 5:1

John Piper on justification by faith alone:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru6e_IPdIFE

Problem Passage – Discussion of the significance of James 2:24

Solution: Different questions being addressed

Paul: “How are we right with God?”

James: “What does saving faith look like?”

See two articles in Digging Deeper below

The significance of the principle in our day

Be aware that indulgences are still being offered – see attached articles

We must embrace justification by faith alone

Key question: do you know that you have eternal life?

We must call ourselves and others to FAITH, trusting Jesus

We must understand the role of faith and works in the Christian life

Is being right with God somehow up to us?

Faith + works → salvation

Or is it an unearned gift that changes our lives forever?

Faith → salvation + works

Works play a HUGE role in our lives. Matthew 5:16, Eph. 2:8-10

We can revel in the idea of “Not so that, but because...”

Q&A

Digging Deeper:

Kevin DeYoung on Paul and James

<https://christcovenant.org/sermons/wait-i-thought-we-were-justified-by-faith-alone/>

Gospel Coalition on Paul and James

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/do-paul-james-disagree-on-justification-by-faith-alone/>

R.C. Sproul video

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/justification-by-faith-alone/after-darkness-light/>



Catholics can receive a plenary indulgence by praying before a Nativity scene



Alexander Hoffmann / Shutterstock

By [Francesca Pollio Fenton](#)

CNA Staff, Nov 25, 2023 / 08:00 am

This year, Catholics will be able to receive a plenary indulgence from Dec. 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to Feb. 2, 2024, the feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by praying before a Nativity scene in a Franciscan church.

Earlier this year, on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the faithful gathered at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, to honor the beloved Italian saint and celebrate the **800th anniversary** of the approval of the Rule of St. Francis (1223) and the creation of the Nativity scene in Greccio.

As part of the celebration of this Franciscan Centenary, the **Conference of the Franciscan Family** asked Pope Francis for the approval of this plenary indulgence.

The conference wrote: “In order to promote the spiritual renewal of the faithful and increase the life of grace, we ask that the faithful receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions from 8 December 2023, the solemnity of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to 2 February 2024, feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by visiting the

churches run by Franciscan families throughout the world and stopping in prayer in front of the Nativity scenes set up there.”

The Apostolic Penitentiary welcomed the request, allowing the faithful to receive this indulgence under the usual conditions.

Those who are sick or unable to participate physically can obtain the indulgence by offering their sufferings up to the Lord or by “carrying out practices of piety.”

What is a plenary indulgence?

A plenary indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church through the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary, and all the saints to remove the temporal punishment due to sin. The indulgence cleanses a person of all temporal punishment due to sin. However, it must always be accompanied by a full detachment from sin.

Conditions to receive a plenary indulgence in all cases:

1. Detachment from all sin, even venial.
2. Sacramental confession, holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope. Sacramental confession and receiving the Eucharist can happen up to about 20 days before or after the act performed to receive a plenary indulgence.

It is appropriate that Communion and the prayer take place on the same day that the work is completed. One sacramental confession is sufficient for several plenary indulgences. However for each plenary indulgence one wishes to receive, a separate reception of the Eucharist and a separate prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father are required.

Pope To Close Holy Door

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pope-to-close-holy-door/> January 5, 2001



Vatican City, Pope, Faithful line up to pass through Holy Door before it closes, Friday, Jan 5 2001 AP

Tens of thousands of faithful waited for hours Friday in St. Peter's Square for their last chance for another 25 years to pass through the basilica's Holy Door. Pope John Paul II closes the door in a ceremony Saturday.

Friday's faithful were far luckier than the thousands who stood the night before in a pouring, cold rain to reach the door in the waning hours of the Vatican's Holy Year marking the start of Christianity's third millennium.

Many doffed their coats in the brilliant morning as they waited as long as four hours. Some people snapped photos of each other or munched snacks. At noon John Paul made an unscheduled appearance at his window overlooking the square to say a prayer and offer good wishes.

Vatican officials have said they would keep the door open beyond the 6 p.m. closing time Friday to let the last person in line pass through.

The line, seven or eight people across, zigzagged across the broad, cobblestone square and up the basilica's steps, where faithful were going through the door at the rate of about 100 per minute.

Giampiero Pierobon and wife, along with their 9-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son, joined the back of the line shortly before the pope's appearance at noon. "We're here because we're practicing believers," said Pierobon.

He said his family, which is from Cittadella in northern Italy, arranged its Christmas vacation to be in Rome just before the closing of the door. "To wait another 25 years perhaps is too much," he said.

Popes usually declare Holy Years each quarter century as a way for Catholics to renew their faith, although occasionally they came sooner.

Pilgrims can gain an indulgence, or remission from punishment for their sins, by passing through St. Peter's Holy Door, as well as the doors of several other major basilicas. The passage must be accompanied by prayer and other actions such as confession and receiving Communion.

As the Christmas season approached, the Vatican said nearly 25 million people had come to Rome for the Holy Year since it began on Christmas Eve 1999. Many of those in the last lines were Romans, among them Rosella Billato, with her 5-month-old daughter, Marica, in her arms and two more little children clutching her. Vatican ushers took pity on her and let her move up to near the front of the line.

After the last pilgrim leaves the basilica, Vatican security officials will check the atrium, where John Paul will lead the solemn, door-closing ceremony. The Vatican is also releasing a special letter Saturday morning from the pope reflecting on the new millennium.

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9 Things You Should Know About the Council of Trent

DECEMBER 5, 2013 by JOE CARTER

Yesterday marked the 450th anniversary of the closing of the Council of Trent, one of the most significant series of meetings in Christian history. Here are nine things evangelicals should know about the Council and the decrees that it issued:

1. The Council of Trent was the most important movement of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church's first significant reply to the growing Protestants Reformation. The primary purpose of the council was to condemn and refute the beliefs of the Protestants, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, and also to make the set of beliefs in Catholicism even clearer. Approximately forty clergymen, mainly Catholic bishops, were in attendance during the twenty-five times over the next eighteen years that the Council convened.

2. Protestants endorse justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) apart from anything (including good works), a position the Catholic Church condemned as heresy. During the the sixth session, the Council issued a decree saying that, "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema."

3. The Protestant Reformers rejected the Apocrypha as part of the biblical canon. (The term Apocrypha (Gr., hidden) is a collection of ancient Jewish writings and is the title given to these books, which were written between 300 and 30 B.C., in the era between the Old and New Testaments.) During the the fourth session, the Council issued a decree damning anyone who rejected these books:

. . . if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.

Many doctrines unique to Catholicism, such as the teachings of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and salvation by works, are found in these books.

4. During the Protestant Reformation, the doctrine of transubstantiation was heavily criticized as an Aristotelian "pseudophilosophy." The 13th session reaffirmed and defined transubstantiation as "that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the

Blood – the species only of the bread and wine remaining – which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation.”

5. Protestants claimed that the only source and norm for the Christian faith was Holy Scripture (the canonical Bible without the Apocrypha). The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* was rejected at Trent. The Council affirmed two sources of special revelation: Holy Scripture (e.g., all the books included in the Latin Vulgate version) and traditions of the church (including the “unwritten traditions”).

6. In Catholic theology, an indulgence is a remission of temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has been forgiven. Under Catholic teaching, every sin must be purified either here on earth or after death in a state called purgatory. The selling of indulgences was not part of official Catholic teaching, though in Martin Luther’s era, the practice had become common. (Luther was appalled by the sermon of an indulgence vendor named John Tetzel who said, “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”) The Council called for the reform of the practice, yet damned those who “say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.”

7. In Catholic theology, purgatory is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who denied yet were not free from “venial” sins (a lesser sin that does not result in a complete separation from God and eternal damnation in hell). The council affirmed the doctrine of purgatory and damned anyone who claimed “that after the grace of justification has been received the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out for any repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid.”

8. In the 24 session, the council issued decrees on marriage which affirmed the excellence of celibacy, condemned concubinage, and made the validity of marriage dependent upon the wedding taking place before a priest and two witnesses. In the case of a divorce, the right of the innocent party to marry again was denied so long as the other party was alive, even if the other party had committed adultery.

9. At the request of Pope Gregory XIII, the Council approved a plan to correct the errors to the Julian calendar that would allow for a more consistent and accurate scheduling of the feast of Easter. The reform included reducing the number of leap years in four centuries from 100 to 97. Although Protestant countries in Europe initially refused to adopt the “Gregorian calendar” (also known as the Western or Christian calendar), it eventually became the most widely accepted and used civil calendar in the world.

(Note: The declarations and anathemas of the Council of Trent have never been revoked. The decrees of the Council of Trent are confirmed by both the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the official “Catechism of the Catholic Church” (1992).)