

# The Word of Faith

Romans 10:5-17

## Introduction

We know that we are saved *Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus*—that is, by **Grace alone** through **Faith alone** in **Christ alone**. St. Paul makes that clear throughout his writings. Today, he shows us what that faith **does** and how we **receive** it.

## What Faith Does

Faith is a matter of **life and death**. There is no salvation without it. It is the difference between eternal damnation in hell and eternal life with God in heaven. To be clear, **Christ** saves. His atoning death on the cross paid the price for sin, for all sin, for the sins of the past, present and future. It paid the price for your sins and mine, for all people everywhere of all time. There is nothing we can do to add to or subtract from our salvation. It all depends on Christ. That's why, the words of the **Absolution** are, "God, in His mercy, has sent His Son to die for you. And for **His sake** forgives you all your sins." Because of Christ's death, all our sins are forgiven.

## We Access Salvation through Faith

This is where **Faith** comes in. Just because Jesus died for all people doesn't mean that all people are saved, as the Universalists and some others teach. John says, in the purpose statement of his *Gospel*, *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)*. We access the salvation offered to all through faith. it is the only way to receive it. The Roman church teaches a doctrine called *ex opera operato*, which literally means "from the works worked." The idea is that the **SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR** is a sacrifice people perform, and you receive His grace simply because you are taking part in this work. However, Scripture teaches you must receive the bread and wine **by faith** because *Ephesians 2:8-9* says that we are saved by **grace** through **faith** *and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast*.

## Faith Changes Us

This may make **verses 9-10** of the **EPISTLE** lesson today confusing (read *Romans 10:9-10*). If salvation comes only through faith, why does the apostle say we have to do something to be saved, namely **confess**? We find the answer in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, specifically in **ARTICLE XIII—LOVE AND FULFILLING THE LAW**. *Confession justifies or saves not by the outward act, but only because of the faith of the heart. Paul says that confession saves in order to show what sort of faith receives eternal life, namely, that which is firm and active. The faith, however, that does not present itself in confession is not firm*. Saving faith moves us to confess Christ and call upon Him in times of trouble. We might look at the story of Peter today. The Lord saved him when he cried out, "Lord, save me!" (*Matthew 14:30*). As *Romans 10:13* says, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." It is only by faith that we can call on the name of the Lord.

## Faith Comes by Hearing

Now we turn to the question, “How do we **receive** this saving faith”? **Verse 17** answers that question: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.* In the **Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration**, under the heading, GOD’S ETERNAL FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION, we read, *God has ordained in His counsel that the Holy Spirit should call, enlighten, and convert the elected through the Word. In order that we may come to Christ, the Holy Spirit works true faith through the hearing of the Word.* When we hear the **WORD OF GOD**, the **Holy Spirit** works **faith** in us. We see here that saving faith itself is not up to us. It, too, is a gift of **grace**. God gives us this **faith** through His **Word**.

## Preaching the Word

That’s what this year’s **Confirmation** classes are all about. Having covered the **Catechism** last year, we are studying other denominations and faiths this year so we can carry on discussions with people different from us and share the **Word** with them. Then the **Holy Spirit** can speak through the **Word** to work faith in their lives as well. This is also one reason why **Bible** memorization is so important. If we can’t back up what we say with **Scripture**, the words are just our words. The power lies in **GOD’S WORD**.

## Means of Grace

So, when the **Word** is added to the water, the **Holy Spirit** forgives our sins and works **faith** in us. Also, when the **Word** is added to the bread and wine, the **Holy Spirit** forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. We receive saving faith through the **WORD**. How comforting to know and be reminded of the fact that our entire salvation is a result of faith, a faith that God works in us as a gift of grace. We don’t have to rely on ourselves for anything. That would be frustrating, indeed. Salvation is ours through the **WORD OF FAITH**.

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*May the peace of God,  
Which passes all understanding,  
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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