

Sola Fide. Only through faith in the Gospel of Christ.

Romans 1: 16-17. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

These verses, as part of Paul’s introduction of the letter in Romans 1, explain Paul’s boldness in proclaiming the gospel. He was “not ashamed of the gospel”. And he boasted only in the gospel (Rom15:7-19). The reason for Paul’s bold confidence was the power of the gospel message itself. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation,” for both the Jew and the Gentile, both the church member and the agnostic, for both the backslidden and the sanctified.

This is a truth which we profess, but which we may easily fail to practice: *The message of the gospel is the means by which God’s power is implemented to save us; to save the lost.*

We must be careful to instead of faith in the saving power of the gospel, rather put our trust in our methods to preach it. To love the wine skins more than the wine it contains!

To have faith in our marketing strategies can so easily replace our firm belief in the simple gospel message that has the power of salvation if it is received in faith. Believing in methods rather than in the Good News, has the risk of watering down and compromising the lesson of the reforming fathers that we are saved by grace, only through faith - that is, faith in the undiluted good news of the gospel, as proclaimed in the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ alone is the way, truth and the life.

If the gospel is itself mighty to save, if it is the power of God resulting in salvation, then we need but to proclaim it, in simplicity, in purity, and in dependence upon God, who will by his Word and Spirit save those who believe it. And save only those who believe it, by the grace of God.

Paul explains his boldness to proclaim the gospel in terms of what it reveals about God. The gospel, Paul says, reveals “the righteousness of God.” The gospel displays that God is awesomely good. It reveals God’s standards of holiness. It reveals God’s divine love by the way in which he saves people through faith, by pouring out his wrath on the Lord Jesus, so that sin’s penalty is paid.

The wine skins that carry the simple, powerful Gospel to all must be fitting to the understanding that it is the wine (the Gospel) and not the wine skins (the messengers) that bring salvation.

This faith is a gift that does not earn us any merit. It is rather a gift of faith in the saving merit of the work of Jesus. If we add anything else to faith as a requirement for salvation, we delete the bold message that the Gospel of Christ really has the power to save.