

# B.A.S.I.C.

*Brothers And Sisters In Christ*

## The Solas of the Reformation

Sailing at night without compass or GPS, North becomes the greatest direction. It can be found by the shining of the polar star, and from it all other directions can be ascertained. The ship can then be sailed straight and true towards home.

Although no doctrine of scripture is of any minor importance, still Martin Luther and the churches that have followed since his time have recognized the foundational nature of the three solas, grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone. These three along with Christ, our true north star, provide the axis upon which our faith is laid, and according to which our life gains a true course.

With a mind to aiding in the meditation of these three scriptural pillars, I have provided you with Martin Luther's own words as found in the Smalcald articles. All the quotes are copied from the Smalcald Articles as found on the following website, <http://bookofconcord.org/smalcald.php>.

### Grace Alone

The following two quotes from Martin Luther highlight the absolutes of scripture. We are absolutely sinful. God's forgiveness is absolutely free. His forgiveness is also absolute in its work, giving complete and total forgiveness. So that the Christian who was before absolutely sinful is now absolutely righteous, purely on the basis of God's grace.

From Smalcald Articles: Part III, Article III

This repentance is not partial and fragmentary, like that which does penance for actual sins, nor is it uncertain like that. For it does not debate what is or is not sin, but hurls everything on a heap, and says: All in us is nothing but sin. What is the use of

investigating, dividing, or distinguishing [for] a long time? For this reason, too, this contrition is not uncertain. For there is nothing left with which we can think of any good thing to pay for sin, but there is only a sure despairing concerning all that we are, think, speak, or do, etc.

In like manner confession, too, cannot be false, uncertain, or partial. For he who confesses that all in him is nothing but sin comprehends all sins, excludes none, forgets none. Neither can the satisfaction be uncertain, because it is not our uncertain, sinful work, but it is the suffering and blood of the [spotless and] innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

From Smalcald Articles: Part III, Article XIII

And such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sins is followed by good works. And what there is still sinful or imperfect also in them shall not be accounted as sin or defect, for Christ's sake; but the entire man, both as to his person and his works, is to be called and to be righteous and holy from pure grace and mercy, shed upon us and spread over us in Christ. Therefore we cannot boast of many merits and works, if they are viewed apart from grace and mercy, but as it is written, 1 Cor. 1:31: He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord, namely, that he has a gracious God. For thus all is well. We say, besides, that if good works do not follow, faith is false and not true.

### Faith Alone

Our salvation is purely on the basis of God's grace, which means that it is a free gift given to us from him without the least hint of any merit or work on our part. That salvation is offered to us in the word

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- Martin Luther*

of God and in the sacraments. The same salvation is received by me through faith. If the word and the sacraments are the hand of God reaching down to give us His gifts, faith is the hand of man into which those gifts are set. Not that it is we who raise our hands to receive this gift, for we are “dead in sin.” But it is God through the Holy Spirit working in His word that gives us life and raises our hands to receive His gift, which is to say that He creates faith. Yet we need not worry about the question, “Do I have this faith?” If you have the gifts of God then it is evident that you have faith, for such gifts can only be received through faith. Therefore we merely ask, “Do I have the forgiveness of sins?” To this question we can always easily answer yes, for we know that Christ died for my sins and rose again for my justification.

From Smalcald Articles: Part II, Article I

That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. 4:25.

And He alone is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, John 1:29; and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, Is. 53:6.

Likewise: All have sinned and are justified without merit [freely, and without their own works or merits] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood, Rom. 3:23f

Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us as St. Paul says, Rom. 3:28: For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Likewise 3:26: That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Christ.

From Smalcald Articles: Part III, Article XIII

What I have hitherto and constantly taught concerning this I know not how to change in the least, namely, that by faith, as St. Peter says, we acquire a new and clean heart, and God will and does account us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our Mediator. And although sin in the flesh has not yet been altogether removed or become dead, yet He will not punish or remember it.

### Scripture Alone

Luther was chiefly concerned with the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, since it gave to him the promise of salvation and peace with God. Rome and its head the Pope was concerned chiefly with the doctrine of authority, since he twisted it to gain power and wealth. Luther for the sake of the Gospel refused to allow the Roman Pontiff this authority. Rather Luther maintained that all authority belongs alone to Christ and the scriptures through which Christ speaks.

Although the phrase Scripture Alone was aimed chiefly at the Roman Pope, Luther also insisted on maintaining the authority of Scripture alone against the enthusiasts. These were men who claimed that because they had the Holy Spirit in their hearts they did not need the written word, and that everyone ought to listen and obey what they said.

From Smalcald Articles: Part II, Article IV

That the Pope is not, according to divine law or according to the Word of God the head of all Christendom (for this [name] belongs to One only, whose name is Jesus Christ), but is only the bishop and pastor of the Church at Rome, and of those who voluntarily or through a human creature (that is, a political magistrate) have attached themselves to him, to be Christians, not under him as a lord, but with him as brethren [colleagues] and comrades, as the ancient councils and the age of St. Cyprian show.

But today none of the bishops dare to address the Pope as brother as was done at that time [in the age of Cyprian]; but they must call him most gracious lord, even though they be kings or emperors. Such arrogance we will not, cannot, must not take upon our conscience. Let him, however, who will do it, do so without us [at his own risk].

From Smalcald Articles: Part III, Article VIII

And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may be protected against the enthusiasts, that is those spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and

before the Word, and accordingly judge Scripture or the spoken Word, and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Muenzer did, and many still do at the present day, who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet know not what they say or declare.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**13<sup>th</sup> Joint Asian Pastoral Conference 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013:-** Once again it is a joy to see through this conference that everyone is connected in prayer and spiritual fellowship with such a unity. Every effort was made by all the pastors to conduct this conference in a very successful manner. It was a great blessing for all the CLCI, BELC, HLCN and CLCM pastors to participate in this pastoral conference and receive the greetings, blessings and encouraging words from the wonderful Lord's people, honorable CLC Missionaries, Chairman of the Mission Board Rev. Todd Ohlmann and president of the CLC Rev. Michel Eichstadt.

Everyone blessed by the words of encouragement and inspiring devotions and essays from the respected Missionaries Rev. David Koenig, Rev. Matthew Ude and Rev. Ed Starkey.

All the mission reports showed the much more improvement in their mission activities. We thank the Lord for the profitable and helpful time of teaching, learning, witnessing and getting ready to discover more opportunities in spreading the Gospel in many new places.

The Lord in His rich mercy and sovereign grace gave more energy to our hands through this conference 2013 to do His work. We pray that our Lord be pleased to bless all such a corporate endeavors through this type of Pastoral Conferences and thus further His work. Our lives are in the hands of the Lord. "Bless the Lord, Oh my soul and all that is within me. Bless the Lord Oh my soul and forget not all his benefits." Also praying that through this Joint Asian conference we would be led into a deeper unity and knowledge of the love of Christ. And thus be brought into the enjoyment of the fullness of God with all the beloved brothers and sis-

ters, under His Headship, and serve Him for His glory in His Church.

Thank you

Yours in His grace,

Pastor Jyothi Benjamin



Pastors attending the 13th Annual Joint Asian Pastoral Conference

## News

Baby Rani, wife of our beloved brother Jyothi Benjamin, recently had severe medical complication for which she needed immediate surgery, otherwise she may have lost the use of legs. Our merciful Father not only provided her with the means to have the surgery but also guided the hands of the surgeons to provide a successful surgery. Baby Rani is now recovering with her husband in Hyderabad. We thank the Lord. We thank Him for giving Jyothi a helper comparable to him, to share the toils of life with. We thank Him for preserving and healing her. We rejoice that we were able to share a small part of their burden. What a wonderful thing fellowship is as we learn to share our lives in the love of Christ. We pray that the Lord may continue to give Baby Rani a quick recovery and that He would remain with her and Jyothi.