

## Marriage Covenant Gospel: the biblical solution to the gospel of Sola Fide



The gospel invented by the Protestant Reformers and espoused by reformed evangelical Christians today is the gospel of Sola Fide (or Faith Alone).<sup>1</sup> The Sola Fide Gospel teaches that the only condition/obligation of salvation is faith in Christ. Hence the name, Sola Fide or Faith Alone. That being said, this view also believes that such faith – if it is truly saving, will produce obedience in those who possess it.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this study will be to prove two things: 1) that this gospel not only works according to the same mechanics and conditions as the Roman Catholic gospel, but equally fails to represent the historical and biblical witness of God's true gospel. 2) The gospel established and supported by the entirety of God's historical and biblical witness is the marriage covenant gospel<sup>3</sup>.

### 1. Like Roman Catholicism, the Sola Fide gospel teaches works/obedience as a necessary condition (after faith) to merit salvation.

1.1. Most people are aware that the RC gospel is a merit-based system of salvation. In other words, a person earns/merits heaven by the practice of faith and obedience/good works<sup>4</sup>. That being said, what most people don't realize is that the Sola Fide gospel functions the same way. It too teaches a merit-based system of salvation. According to this gospel, it is Jesus who obeys and earns our way to heaven<sup>5</sup>. Our responsibility is to place faith in Him so that such merit might be credited to our account. However if the faith we possess is truly saving, then (as previously discussed) it too must possess obedience – not as a condition of salvation, but rather as indicator/evidence of such faith. The problem with this understanding is that:

1.1.1. The Bible does not view obedience as the evidence of faith – but rather as *essential along w/faith* (i.e. as an additional condition necessary to salvation) (Jam 19-26) = Faith is (20) “useless” (not useful to salvation) if it is not accompanied by obedience. Notice, he doesn't question the man's faith – instead he affirms it (19 – “you believe”). The problem therefore is NOT about possessing the right kind of faith, but understanding that faith alone is NOT enough. It is instead only becomes “active” or useful when “works”/obedience are added to it (22 – “faith was completed by his works” = Abe's faith needed the addition of “works”/obedience if he was to be “justified”/saved by God – Rev 6:11; Jam 1:4; Luk 14:28; 2Co 10:6 - adding something to something). Hence the reason James can say what he does in (21). Hence the reason James can also say that the scriptures regarding Abe's previous faith (Gen 15:6) were “fulfilled” (*not confirmed*) (23). IOW: What God declared to him at that time (i.e. that he was righteous), was only possible if obedience was added to it (in this case, Abe's obedience in sacrificing Isaac). This then is what leads James to conclude what he does in (24-25 = the conditions of both faith and faithfulness/obedience are needed to be justified/saved). James words in (26) are therefore the consistent conclusion to his previous argument: NOT obedience as evidence of/confirming faith – BUT rather essential along w/faith (just as the spirit is essential along w/the body if there is to be life, so also obedience is essential along w/faith for there to be spiritual life). In the form of an equation what James is NOT saying is faith = salvation + works (the position of the Sola Fide gospel), but instead faith + obedience = salvation.

1.1.2. This is true even when such acts of obedience are used as evidence/indicators. They are evidence/indicators not of faith – but salvation (e.g. Gal 5:19-25) = The “works of the flesh” (19-21) and the “fruit of the Spirit” (22-23) each function to indicate/identify the spiritual state (unsaved/saved) of the person – NOT the kind of faith they possess (unsaved/saved). As a matter of fact, there is NO mention of faith. It is instead assumed (25 – they “live by the Spirit” – i.e. have rec'd the Holy Spirit as genuinely saved people who put genuine saving faith in Christ – 3:2)<sup>6</sup>. What then (according to Paul) will determine if a person will (or “will not) inherit the kingdom of God” is (NOT simply their faith) but their behavior. IOW: It is the condition of obedience (after coming into saving relationship w/Christ by faith) that will determine such things. Will they crucify “the flesh w/its passions and desires”(24)? Will they “walk by the spirit” (25) – i.e. submit in obedience to His will?

1.1.3. God communicates such obedience in the form of imperatives (or commands) – or things that we directly/personally are responsible for fulfilling/doing (e.g. Eph 5:22, 25, 6:1). By definition anything you are responsible for doing, *is a condition*<sup>7</sup>. Given that (like RC) this condition to obedience exists within a merit-based system of salvation (i.e. the Sola Fide gospel believes salvation is earned/merited), this means that such obedience must also (therefore) be meritorious since any condition requiring work w/in a meritorious system is not charity, but merit (Rom 4:4).

So then, whether intended or not, the Sola Fide gospel possesses the same mechanics and conditions for salvation as RC. It too is a merit-based system of salvation with both faith *and obedience* as the conditions for salvation which (once more) - whether intended or not, means the Sola Fide gospel is a gospel requiring that we (not just Christ) earn our way to heaven.<sup>8</sup>

### 2. Like Roman Catholicism, the Sola Fide gospel misrepresents (even slanders), the historical and biblical witness of the Jews (including the Pharisees) who never believed God's gospel (or plan of salvation) to be works-based/meritorious. (Luk 5:21 w/Mat 23:1-3; Mat 23:13, 23, 25, 27-28 – hypocrites...full of hypocrisy and lawlessness)<sup>9</sup>. As such, it reveals Luther and the other key Reformers' initial failure. Instead of learning about Judaism (since Christianity is just New Covenant Judaism – or Judaism 2.0), they continued to embrace the erroneous merit-based soteriology of Roman Catholicism and ended up with Roman Catholicism 2.0.

<sup>1</sup> Luther called this gospel “the article on which the church stands or falls”, Calvin, “the hinge on which turns all [true] religion.”

<sup>2</sup> A common mantra within the Sola Fide camp is “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

<sup>3</sup> Space and time do not allow me to cover the amount of Scripture needed to provide a thorough analysis of my subjects. A much fuller treatment is however presented in my “work-in-process” book, *Marriage Covenant Gospel*. A complete bibliography for (most of) the quotes in this current study can also be found there.

<sup>4</sup> “We must believe that nothing further is wanting to those justified to prevent them from being considered to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained in its [due] time.” – (Paul III, Council of Trent)

<sup>5</sup> “We can actually say that we are saved by works—not at all by our works, but instead by Christ's works, His perfect obedience, on our behalf.” – Stephen J. Nichols (Ligonier Ministries, Statement on Christology)

<sup>6</sup> This is major point to consider for those in the Sola Fide camp who believe people can be called believers in Scripture and yet not genuinely be saved – or possessing saving faith. Can such people possess the Spirit? These in Galatia did and yet are being warned of the possibility of damning disobedience. Only one of two options (or poisons) are available: 1) either they admit them to be those possessing genuine/saving faith – which if true, means their entire view is destroyed since saving faith doesn't always produce obedience, 2) or they claim unsaved people can possess the Holy Spirit – which presents another whole host of theological problems since the Spirit is only given to those who are justified – Paul's very reason for bringing up the Spirit in Galatians in the first place – i.e. if they had the Spirit, they could be sure they were justified by the faith they possessed.

<sup>7</sup> In this light consider the following statements: “Here we can lay down a self-evident principle: a necessary result for which we are responsible which must be present for another result to occur is no different than an additional condition for the achievement of the second result” – Joseph Dillow (*Reign Of The Servant Kings*); “There is logically no difference between a necessary result of faith for which we are responsible and a condition of eternal salvation. These words (‘for which we are responsible’) are the nail in the coffin of Perseverance Theology.” – Jeremy D. Myers (*Good Works: A Necessary Result Of Justification? CTS Journal*).

<sup>8</sup> The anticipated response to this conclusion is an appeal to monergism – or the belief that everything in salvation – including our responsibility to good works, is ultimately generated by God (or the Holy Spirit) removing us from the equation of merit. Besides its lack of sound biblical support, this response makes God's commands, threats and the church's discipline completely nonsensical. If true, shouldn't such things (commands, threats and discipline) be directed at God (or the Holy Spirit) since He (therefore) is the responsible party? I have yet to hear of an evangelical church disciplining out the Holy Spirit when their Christian members are found guilty of egregious sin. It sb mentioned (also) that desiring to obey (the work/obligation of the Spirit) does not equal the act of obeying (the work/obligation of humans).

<sup>9</sup> Various Jewish scholars over time have attempted to speak to the slanderous portrayals of Judaism as legalistic or merit-based made by Christians but to no avail. One such Jewish scholar, Samuel Sandmel laments, “It can be set down as something to endure eternally that the usual Christian commentators will disparage Judaism and its supposed legalism, and Jewish scholars will reply, usually fruitlessly. With those Christians who persist in deluding themselves about Jewish legalism, no academic communication is possible.” (*Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal*). The hubris of such Christians is palpable. For further study see, Kent Yinger's, “The Continuing Quest For Jewish Legalism”, also E.P. Sanders seminal work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

### 3. Like the 2nd century heretic Marcion<sup>10</sup>, the Sola Fide Gospel inevitably results in two gospels and an evil Old Covenant God.

3.1. Two gospels: Though those in the Sola Fide camp believe their gospel existed in the Old Testament, they ultimately concede it to be a New Testament/Covenant phenomenon<sup>11</sup>. This is especially true when considering the Old Covenant. The “gospel” preached by Moses was (according to them) Law – or legalism, people saved through the impossible observance of laws and a merciless system of justice, whereas the gospel preached by Jesus was grace and forgiveness, or people saved by faith. Two gospels, two fundamentally different ways/plans of salvation<sup>12</sup>. This distinction is most clearly seen in Evangelicalism’s main theological systems, Dispensationalism and Covenantalism. Each use the terms, law and grace to distinguish between what they believe to be God’s two major redemptive plans in salvation history (Dispensationalism = dispensation of law/dispensation of grace; Covenantalism = law covenant/grace covenant). This gospel distinction/difference was also the basis of Luther’s Law/Grace dichotomy<sup>13</sup>. Such a distinction/difference/dichotomy becomes immediately problematic when considering such biblical texts as (Deu 30:11; 2Ti 3:15-16; Eph 2:20; 1Co 10:1-11).

3.2. An evil Old Covenant God: Countless Jews were unrighteously killed by God under the Old Covenant. This is the conclusion that must be drawn if the law gospel is indeed true since culpability requires capability - i.e. you cannot justly hold people responsible for what is impossible to do. Assuming this as the reason Christ fulfilled such laws under the New Covenant equally indicts God (Why did He not do this before? Why did God set His people up to fail? Why did so many people have to die under a gospel that God knew didn’t work? Did God get counseling?). In the end the Sola Fide gospel makes God worse than Hitler since the number of Jews killed so unjustly were far more than those murdered by the German Fuhrer. Lastly, it is hard to believe the Jews to be God’s special people, if this was the kind of gospel they received. Sucked to be them (Heb 13:8 w/Jud 1:5).

4. Like the real Pharisees of history and Scripture<sup>14</sup>, the Sola Fide gospel ultimately ends in antinomianism (against the Law) – or obedience to God’s Law as “nice but not necessary.” Though those in the Sola Fide camp may protest this connection to antinomianism – especially those holding to the traditional view (obedience will follow saving faith), the accuracy/fairness of the accusation is established by the heresy itself. According to the bible, what makes you guilty of antinomianism is NOT that you totally reject obedience – or don’t (personally) practice obedience, but that you believe and teach that such obedience is not a *condition* of salvation. (Act 21:17-26 – “teach to forsake”; In the OT, this was the sign of a false prophet/teacher – Deu 13:1-8. Jesus condemned such pharisaical antinomian practices calling for the faithful fulfillment of God’s Law by God’s people – or anyone who wanted to go to heaven – Mat 5:17-20 – “to fulfill them” [πληρώω] = To see them fulfilled – meaning by us. Hence the verses that follow [19-20]. These verses make no sense if Jesus is speaking about Himself as the One doing the fulfilling. Why again the obligation placed on us in the verses that follow – Why “teach” and “do” what has already been fulfilled? Not only that, but if His fulfilling has removed our obligation as many in the Sola Fide camp state, then how is this not abolishing them?). The confusion caused by Sola Fide camp (in relation to obedience) has ironically made them the new Pharisees. In their effort to avoid works-based legalism (as well as protect their sacred cow of Sola Fide), they have inadvertently preached antinomianism and become like the real Pharisees of Scripture<sup>15</sup>. Martin Luther is the perfect example of this. Luther often promoted antinomianism as the acceptable alternative to his work-based paranoia.<sup>16</sup> The antinomianism of the Sola Fide gospel can also be seen in its various “antinomian – flavored” doctrines:

<sup>10</sup> Marcion believed in two gospels: one for the Old Testament, and one for the New Testament. The god of the Old Testament and Judaism was different than Jesus, the god of the New Testament and Christianity. The Old Testament god – or “demiurge” was an evil, fear-mongering tribal deity who taught salvation as legalistic (law-keeping) reciprocal (eye for an eye) justice who spent most of his time threatening and punishing His people with eternal death. In contrast, Jesus was the God of grace and forgiveness calling His people only to believe and pursue love for salvation with no real threat of eternal death as long as such belief and love continued. Marcion’s bible was redacted accordingly, taking out those portions of the New Testament where he found calls to obedience, threats of condemnation or promotion of the Law. Marcion recorded his beliefs in his book, *Antitheses*.

<sup>11</sup> “Such a salvation [Sola Fide/faith alone] was unknown in the old covenant.” James Fowler (*Old Testament Believers, New Testament Christians*).

<sup>12</sup> Though the Sola Fide camp would view all forms of God’s salvation as merit-based, the distinctions between the Old and New Covenant gospels are significant enough to require viewing them as fundamentally different since what has changed is more than efficacy or application. There is also a change in the essential conditions for salvation. The essential condition of the first is obedience/works, the second only faith. So then, though there is historical continuity (i.e. God’s plan of salvation continues to be merit-based), the end product of the New Covenant gospel – because of the fundamental change in conditions, actually makes them a altogether different species. Ironically, the best analogy to explain their erroneous view is the equally erroneous theory of Darwinian evolution/mutation: same genetic ancestor yet different species due to the fundamental changes of evolution.

<sup>13</sup> The Bible according to Luther was to be split into two parts or gospel: one, the new gospel of Grace, the other, the old gospel of Law. The new gospel or Grace represented any portion of Scripture that speaks to what God does for us through Christ, the other (Law or old gospel), those portions which speak to what we must – but cannot do, and consequently are condemned for. The old gospel serves the new gospel (in bringing people to see their sin), but the new gospel never (in return) serves the old, “In the Bible, God preaches only two public sermons [or gospels]—two sermons [or gospels] that all of the people can hear. Now the first sermon [or gospel], and doctrine, is the law of God. The second is the gospel [of grace]. These two sermons [or gospels] are not the same. Therefore we must have a good grasp of the matter in order to know how to differentiate between them. We must know what the law [gospel] is, and what the gospel [of grace] is. The law [gospel] commands and requires us to do certain things. The law [gospel] is thus directed solely to our behavior and consists in making requirements. For God speaks through the law, saying, ‘Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you.’ The gospel [of grace], however, does not preach what we are to do or to avoid. It sets up no requirements but reverses the approach of the law [gospel], does the very opposite, and says, ‘This is what God has done for you; he has let his Son be made flesh for you, has let him be put to death for your sake.’ So, then, there are two kinds of doctrine and two kinds of works, those of God and those of men. Just as we and God are separated from one another, so also these two doctrines are widely separated from one another. For the gospel [of grace] teaches exclusively what has been given us by God, and not—as in the case of the law [gospel]—what we are to do and give to God...Necessity demands, therefore, that [the Bible] should have an announcement, or preface, by which the simple man can be brought back from the old notions to the right road, and taught what he is to expect in this book, so that he may not seek laws and commandments where he ought to be seeking [grace] and God’s promises...I shall say at once that what is signified by them, [the Law gospel] is always what men ought to do and not what they do or can do...The commands exist to show, not our moral ability, but our inability...The proper use and aim of the Law [gospel] is to make guilty those who are smug and at peace, so that they may see that they are in danger so that they may be terrified and despairing . . . To the extent that they are such, they are under the Law [gospel]...All the Law [gospel] can do is to render us naked and guilty.” (*Luther’s Works*).

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned, the Pharisees of scripture were not fastidious law-keepers but rather hypocrites – which made them also antinomians – or those denying the need to obey God’s Law in order to be saved. For them – along w/many of the Jews in both the Old and New Testament, their identity as Abraham’s descendants or belief in the one true God (Yaweh) was all that was truly needed. Hence their appeals to such things and the divine warnings that follow (Mat 3:7-9 = ML the reason John refers to the Pharisees as “vipers” is due to their antinomian hypocrisy. Like the fork-tongued beast, they said one thing but did another. Jesus indicts and identifies them in the same way, see Joh 8:39. This is also how we are to understand Jesus’ call to possess a “righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees”, Mat 5:20. We are not to be antinomian in our view/practice of the Law – thinking we are saved only b/c of our faith/belief, but rather -according to His prior instruction, be those who practice and teach even the least significant portions of the Law – Mat 5:17-19).

<sup>15</sup> “It is not easy steering clear of...antinomianism. In an effort to avoid Jewish legality, it is most natural to fall into antinomianism.” – Harry Ironside (*Sutherland’s Last Will*).

<sup>16</sup> “Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your faith in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. This life is not a place where righteousness can exist. No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery a thousand times each day.” “The Christian or baptized man cannot, even if he would, lose his soul by any sins however great, unless he refuses to believe; for no sin whatever can condemn him, but unbelief alone.” (*Letter To Philip Melancthon*); “It [the Law of Moses] is no longer binding on us because it was given only to the people of Israel...Moses has nothing to do with us [New Testament saints]. If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses...Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service...Exodus 20:1...Makes it clear that event the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us...We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver – unless he agrees with both the NT and the natural law...not one little period of Moses pertains to us.” (*Luther’s Works*). Regarding Luther’s antinomian leanings away from the Law James Payton Jr. writes, “Indeed, it would not be too much to state that Luther detected a threat to justification by faith alone behind every blade of grass and under every rock in the landscape. Luther considered it a corruption of the Christian message to teach that the law directs believers in this regard. He had learned by brutal experience that the law offered no comfort to human beings and only drove them to despair before God. To reintroduce the law as a guideline for Christian living must eventually lead, according to Luther, to a reversion to works-righteousness.” (*Getting the Reformation Wrong*). To discuss obedience to God’s Law – or anything else for that matter as also essential to salvation, was in Luther’s eyes neither gospel or a proper understanding of the Scriptures. This included even the Scripture itself. Those portions that disagreed with his

**4.1. Judgment according to faith** (versus the biblical doctrine of judgment according to our deeds) = Our deeds are only assessed to reveal whether we possessed faith - since to say it is truly about our deeds/obedience would mean they are a real condition of salvation<sup>17</sup>. According to the bible however, this is exactly what they represent. Our deeds are relevant NOT B/C they reveal faith – but obedience/disobedience – the other condition of salvation (Mat 7:21-23 = Those being condemned possessed faith. Their failure was their refusal to obey/practice of iniquity – i.e. their deeds revealed not lack of faith but lack of obedience. They were unfaithful to their relationship w/Christ - see also 2Pe 2:1; Mat 21:28-32, 33-45, 24:36-51, 25:24-30).

**4.2. Eternal security/Unbeliever only apostasy** (versus the biblical doctrine of real/genuine apostasy – i.e. real/genuine Christians permanently losing their salvation) = If you truly have believed, then you can't lose your salvation. Instead, if you apostasize, it just means you never truly believed/were saved - since those who have (truly believed/are genuinely saved) are secure in Christ. (Heb 10:26-30) = Those in danger of apostasy (26- there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins") are "brothers", those who have entered the "holy places by the blood of Jesus" (19), those who are told also to "hold fast the confession of their hope without wavering" (23). They are legitimate/real Christians. Hence the reason, they are identified as those who have "profaned the blood of the covenant by which [they were] sanctified" (26). This is the reason also that the threat is identified as "God [judging] His people." (30). To claim therefore that this is speaking about false Christians/unbelievers is like saying the someone who gets a divorce was never (truly) married. Their logic baffles the mind. It is however (once more) an effort to protect the sacred cow – to make sure that the Sola Fide promise of saving faith producing obedience (or never apostasizing) remains true.

**4.3. The Covenant of Works** = Adam was under probation in the Garden of Eden. He was to become righteous thru perfect obedience, at which point God would grant Him eternal life in a fixed state of righteousness. Adam proved we cannot obey God perfectly and obedience therefore cannot be a condition of our salvation. This doctrine is nowhere taught (nor hinted at) in the Scriptures. The above points (and their horrible denial/twisting of biblical truth) could be compared to a person who - b/c of their arrogant refusal to admit they initial untruth, continues to generate further untruths to cover/explain away the constant inconsistencies created by the first. Or the idiot child whose IQ test reveals he forced the square blocks into the round holes rather than putting them in the proper place). God warns of dire consequences for those who do such things (2Pe 3:16).

**5. Change in re: to those entrenched in the Sola Fide gospel will require the heart of a true disciple and lover of God, and gracious patience on the part of those who are attempting to teach them the truth of God's Word (Isa 8:20, 50:4; Mat 6:10; 2Ti 4:2).**

**6. The biblical gospel of Marriage Covenant (or the Marriage Covenant Gospel) solves the problems associated/created by the Sola Fide gospel by teaching works as the necessary condition (after faith) to maintain the salvation already gained.**

6.1. When we ask how people are saved in the bible, the answer is always the same: they are saved thru making covenant w/God (Adamic – Hos 6:7, Noahic – Gen 6:7, Abrahamic – Gen 17:2, Old – Exo 19:5, New – Luk 22:20)<sup>18</sup>. When we inquire as to the kind of covenants, the answer is: they are marriage covenants between Christ (the covenant making God of the bible) and His people (Jer 31:31-32; Jud 1:5; Eze 16:8; Eph 5:25ff). Hence the reason the bible begins and ends with a marriage (Gen 2:23-24 and Rev 21:1-2) and most of the salvific language in the bible is marital in nature (e.g. Joh 14:1-3 w/2Co 11:1-2; also Mat 7:23). This then determines how salvation functions. It is not meritorious (just as a marriage is not meritorious). Marriage is instead the paradigm of gain and maintain, of faith and faithfulness. By faith, we enter into marriage covenant w/one another. That covenant however also includes vows of faithfulness. Such faithfulness (expressed on the day we make covenant), we then fulfill thru their faithful practice as the means to maintaining the marriage and its blessings/promises. To not be faithful will mean forfeiture/loss of such blessings/promises – even possibly, divorce. Applied to the New Covenant, our marriage to Christ is gained by faith expressed through the waters of baptism – the place also we first receive His atoning blood (1Pe 3:21 w/Mat 16:19, 28:19 and Mar 16:16; Rom 6:1-7 = being justified happens thru Christ's death or passive obedience only). As the wife (or church) in this marriage, our vows in this marriage are the same as they have always been throughout redemptive history – faithful obedience to all that He has commanded (i.e. all of His Law). This is how we maintain the salvation/marriage covenant that we have entered into w/Him (Deu 28:1-2, 30:11-14; Exo 24:7-8 w/1Pe 1:1-2; Mat 5:17-20, 19:16-30, 22:1-4; 24:42-25:46; Mat 28:18-20; Luk 3:8-18, 19:1-10; 2CO 11:2; Eph 4:1; Phi 2:12-16, 3:10-14; Col 1:23; Heb 10:19-30; Jam 2:14-26; 2Pe 1:5-11, 3:14-17; 1Jo 2:28-3:10; 2Jo 1:8; Jud 1:20-21; Rev 2:10, 26, 3:4-5, 21:6-8; Mat 22:1-14 w/Rev 19:6-8)<sup>19</sup>. This is also how we continue to receive all Christ's blessings/promises – those given as His portion of the marriage vows – which like ours, has also been historically the same (*Die Bundesformel* – "I shall be their God and they shall be My people"; Gen 17:7-8; Exo 6:7, 29:45; Lev 26:11-12; Deu 26:17-18, 29:13; Jer 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22, 31:1,33, 32:38; Eze 11:20, 14:11, 34:22-30, 36:27-38, 37:23-27; Hos 2:23; Zec 8:8, 13:9; 2Co 6:16; Heb 8:10; Rev 21:3,7)<sup>20</sup>. And as before, to not be faithful (on our part) will mean forfeiture of the blessings/promises – or even divorce from Christ in the forms of excommunication (Isa 50:1; 1Co 5:1-13) or apostasy (Jer 3:1w/Deu 24:1-4; Deu 29:18-20; Heb 6:4-8, 10:26-30).

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personal interpretation, he sought to modify or remove. For example, Luther added the word "alone" to his German translation of Romans 3:28 ("we maintain that a person is justified by faith alone, apart from the works of the law"), though the original text does not contain the word. In response to criticism on this point, Luther said, "You tell me what a great fuss the Papists are making because the word 'alone' is not in the text of Paul...say right out to him: 'Dr. Martin Luther will have it so,...I will have it so, and I order it to be so, and my will is reason enough. I know very well that the word 'alone' is not in the Latin or the Greek text" (*Rebuilding a Lost Faith*). Ironically, the only place in the bible that the words "faith" and "alone" occur together is in the negative – or as the means to rejecting the idea that Luther was attempting to promote (Jam 2:24 – "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone"). In reference to this text, Luther's study bible bears the note, "It is lie". Luther called the book of James, "the epistle of straw", and attempted to remove it from the New Testament. Similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century heretic Marcion, Luther attempted to destroy all New Testament books that could not be reconciled with his personal interpretation and gospel message. This included also the books of Hebrews, Jude and Revelation. In regard to the epistle of James, Luther wrote, "Let us banish this epistle from the university, for it is worthless. It has no syllable about Christ, not even naming him except once at the beginning. I think it was written by some Jew who had heard of the Christians but not joined them... The epistle of James gives us much trouble, for the Papists embrace it alone and leave out all the rest...Accordingly, if they will not admit my interpretations, then I shall make rubble also of it. I almost feel like throwing Jimmy into the stove." In response to Luther's questionable practices and Sola Fide gospel, Paul Rainbow says the following, "[These facts] ought to unsettle any for whom sola fide has become a shibboleth. It is reason enough to re-examine the biblical grounds... With regard to [the sola fide gospel's] effects in history, the doctrine is dangerous. Since the [the time of Luther], it has proven powerless to check repeated outbreaks of antinomianism in churches... resulting in large fringes of congregants today imbued with the heresy that without mortifying sins they can nevertheless rest assured of reaching heaven. One prominent Lutheran theologian has dubbed antinomianism 'the heresy of the [evangelical] American church.'" (*The Way Of Salvation*).

<sup>17</sup> "Obedience never becomes any part of the instrument through which we are accepted with God or finally saved from the wrath to come." – R. Scott Clark (Heidelblog: Recovering the Reformed Confession, "Is Faith Alone Is The Instrument Of Justification And Salvation")

<sup>18</sup> If a person is to receive God's salvific promises, then covenant is the relationship which must be entered into. It is for this reason that the promises of God are often communicated while mentioning this aspect of covenant (Gen 17:4-7; Lev 26:9; Psa 111:1-10; Mat 26:28; Act 3:25). Likewise, where covenant ceases to exist, so also do the promises (compare Hos 1:2-9 with 2:20-23 = As will be discussed, the statements regarding betrothal and God as their God [and they as his people] represent the covenant ratifying declaration -or divine oath, common to the salvific covenants. As such, these words in Hosea indicate the removal and re-establishment of covenant in relation to Israel.

<sup>19</sup> Both the Old and New Testament present examples of people who not only met God's standard of faithfulness, but were also personally aware of it (e.g. David – Psa 18:20-24; Paul – 2Ti 4:8; Those in many of the churches – including those of Revelation: Smyrna - 2:10, Thyratira - 2:24, Sardis- 3:4, Philadelphia - 3:8-11).

<sup>20</sup> This formula follows very closely in form to the vow taken by the potential groom in ancient Israel, "I will be your husband, and you shall be my wife." (*Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, p. 45). The *Bundesformel* therefore lends further support to the marriage argument.

6.2. The only difference between the Old Covenant and New Covenant versions of the gospel are in application. Faith in Christ has become the new application to those Old Testament laws for gaining justification or the marriage relationship (i.e. the clean laws of circumcision, sacrifice, sabbaths and separation). This is what Paul is referring to in many of his letters when he seemingly speaks against the Law. It is not God's laws for maintaining our relationship (i.e. the moral commands) that he is opposed to, but rather the old application of those laws (i.e. the clean laws) related to gaining relationship (what he often calls "the works of the law" or the "law for righteousness" – e.g. Rom 10:4) since Christians are already observing them by their faith in Christ (who has become our circumcision, sacrifice, sabbath and separation -Col 2:11; Heb 10:12; Heb 4:3; 2Co 6:14-18; consider Rom 10:4 w/Rom 13:8-10). Hence the reason any time Paul speaks in this way, one or more of the clean laws are also mentioned (e.g. Gal 2:11-16; Rom 3:28-30). Hence the reason also, Paul can say such things as (1Co 7:19 = Paul clearly saw a necessary distinction within the Law; Rom 3:31; Rom 13:8-10; see also Lev 10:10-11 – God has always made such a distinction in the Law<sup>21</sup>). The New Testament/Covenant and its gospel are therefore not a replacement, but simply the upgrade to what continues to function authoritatively as its foundation, the Old Testament/Covenant and its moral commands (Mat 5:17-20; Mat 28:19-20 w/Isa 2:1-5)<sup>22</sup>.

6.3. In summary then, the gospel presented throughout the pages of Scripture is the same in its fundamental makeup/mechanics. It is not salvation by merit, but by gain and maintain. The Marriage Covenant gospel solves all of the problems and avoids all of the heresy created by the Sole Fide gospel: 1) it presents one gospel and version of God (the same in its conditions or mechanics, the same disposition of Christ toward its recipients – Heb 13:8; Hence why the writers of the NT can appeal to the OT to learn/become wise in re: to this gospel – 2Ti 3:15), 2) it also preserves the bible's teaching on judgment according to deeds and apostasy while fighting against the heresy of antinomianism (Mat 13:41-42; Rom 2:13; Jam 1:25)<sup>23</sup>.

**CLOSING CONTEMPLATION:** Does this mean all those people/pastors/churches who preach the Sola fide gospel are false teachers or not Christians? **No** - not if they preach and practice faithful obedience . It just means they are being inconsistent to what their gospel actually teaches. They are in essence saved by their inconsistency. This would be true of all of those who preach and practice what today is known as Lordship salvation.

<sup>21</sup> The belief that divisions/distinctions do exist in the Old Testament laws can be found going back to the early centuries of Christianity in the writings of such men as Barnabas, Tertullian and Augustine (Cf. Barnabas, *The Epistle of Barnabas*; Tertullian, *An Answer To The Jews*, ch. 2,5; *Against Marcian*, 2.17; Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 6.2). However, it was Thomas Aquinas - and later the Reformers and their confessions, who did the most in establishing it as important Christian doctrine (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa 2.6.99.3 -2.6.99.4*; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, Bk 4, Ch. 20, Sec 14; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenction Theology*, 11.24.1; Westminster Confession; London Baptist of 1689; Heidelberg Catechism). Such division/distinctions however are not only a Christian construct. Judaism also recognizes that they exist and are key to understanding the Scriptures (Cf. Boaz Cohen, *Law and Tradition in Judaism*, 1959, 188-189; T.R. Rich, *Judaism 101*, 2005; R. Bisschops, "Case Study on Samuel Holdheim", *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches*, 1999, p.291). Reformed theology has traditionally held to a three-fold division or tripartite distinction of the Law. However, upon examination of the literature used to support their position, I have failed to find biblical support for anything other than a two-fold division. This includes Barnabas, the second century bishop and direct disciple of the apostle John. His epistle makes clear he held the bi-partite distinction. It seems safe to assume then, that this was also the view of the apostles.

<sup>22</sup> Many have attempted to interpret Paul's words as being at odds with Jesus in regard to the Law, but nothing could be further from the biblical truth. As an apostle, Paul spoke the same message as Jesus regarding the Law. Moreover, his role as an inspired writer of the New Testament guaranteed it. Those privileged enough to contribute to the canon of Holy Writ were not functioning as authors of originality, but simply teaching what had already been established. Hence the reason Paul identifies those who desire to be teachers in the church, as "teachers of the Law" (1Ti 1:7). Furthermore, this is why Paul sends Timothy to the Old Testament Scriptures "to make [him] wise for salvation" and "training in righteousness" (2Ti 3:15-17). It is for this reason also, when arrested and charged by the Jews of propagating a new religion which rejected the Law, Paul not only vehemently denied such claims, but made efforts to demonstrate and declare Christianity's fierce loyalty to its observance (Act 21:17-36 with 24:1-16, 25:1-8). Paul's numerous references to the Law as support for his instruction to the churches proves his commitment to its continuing authority was neither fickle nor waning. For example, in giving instruction to the children in the Ephesian church (Eph 6:1-3), Paul quotes Exodus 20:12. The same can be found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1Co 9:7-10). In defense of Christian ministers receiving financial compensation, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4. There are to be sure, many more which could be considered (Rom 2:6, 12:20, 13:8-10; 1Co 5:13, 6:16, 9:9-11, 10:7, 14:21, 34; 2Co 6:1-2,16-18, 8:15; Gal 3:11, 5:14; Eph 4:25-26, 5:31; 1Ti 5:18). And Paul was not alone. All of the New Testament authors bear witness to the Old Testament's (or the Law's) continuing authority. This becomes apparent when considering how often its speakers directly quote or allude to the Old Testament as support for their instruction (e.g. Mat 18:15-18, 19:1-9, 17-19, 22:38-39; Luk 6:3-5; Joh 5:14; Heb 3:6-15, 4:6-13, 10:27-30, 36-39, 12:4-6, 12, 13:5; Jam 2:8-13; 1Pe 1:14-16, 3:10-12, 4:17-19). As additional support, it should be noted that several of the commands given in the New Testament are impossible either to understand or fulfill without the Old Testament. As it relates to the former, consider the New Testament word translated as "sexual immorality". Prohibitions against it occur no less than a dozen times, yet little explanation is provided by the New Testament speakers as to what kinds of sexual activity actually make a person guilty of this particular sin. The reason for such silence, is most assuredly because such information has already been provided in the Old Testament. It is here that the New Testament speakers expected their audience to turn in order to determine the crime's scope. The same is true as it relates to certain New Testament commands and their fulfillment. For example, Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mat 22:39). The command itself, not only originates in the Old Testament (Lev 19:18), but – according to both Jesus and the apostle Paul, requires obedience to the Law to fulfill (Mat 22:40; Rom 13:8-10). Love is therefore subservient to the Law. Put in terms of impossibility, it is impossible to love others without observance of God's Old Testament laws. The important act of turning from (or forsaking) one's sin otherwise known as repentance, also requires adherence to the Law. Why do I say that? Because sin – the object I am to be forsaking by my repentance, is according to the apostle John, "lawlessness" (1Jo 3:4), a term that most specifically refers to those actions which are in violation to God's Old Testament laws. Therefore, to repent - as well as determine what is sin, requires the Law. The same must be concluded regarding the subject of good works, or the judgment according to works. If the Law is the standard by which sin is determined, then so also must be those things which constitute good and bad works. Nevertheless, it may be the Latin maxim of *stare decisis* which provides the best argument for the Law's continuing authority and binding nature on the people of God today. As a fundamental part of any legal system, this principle assumes - among other things, that laws established in the past remain authoritative in the future, unless overturned. As a result, it is this legal maxim which allows us to assume that when previous laws (or past precedent) are cited as support for present cases, it is because those laws continue in force. They have not been overturned. Plugging then all of this back into our conversation on God's Old Testament laws, provides (in this author's mind) an irrefutable argument for the Law's continuing authority under the New Covenant. Since how could Jesus, the apostle Paul and the rest of the New Testament authors and speakers use the Old Testament as their support unless those commands are still in force? It is worth mentioning also that like our own legal system, where only those appointed to the supreme place as judges can overturn prior precedent, so also Jesus - the supreme judge and lawgiver, is the only one who can overturn the prior laws of the Old Testament (*not Paul!*). Jesus' refusal to abolish the prior precedent is why (then) those appointed as his counselors (i.e. the apostles) are found still preaching and teaching its authority. Only in respect to application did Jesus change some of those prior laws.

<sup>23</sup> Various Christians throughout the church's history have held to a similar view including but not limited to: John Owen, William Ames, Francis Turretin, Richard Baxter, Thomas Goodwin and John Davenant. For further study on the relation of works to faith presented here see Mark Jones's essay, "Good Works Are Necessary To Salvation?".