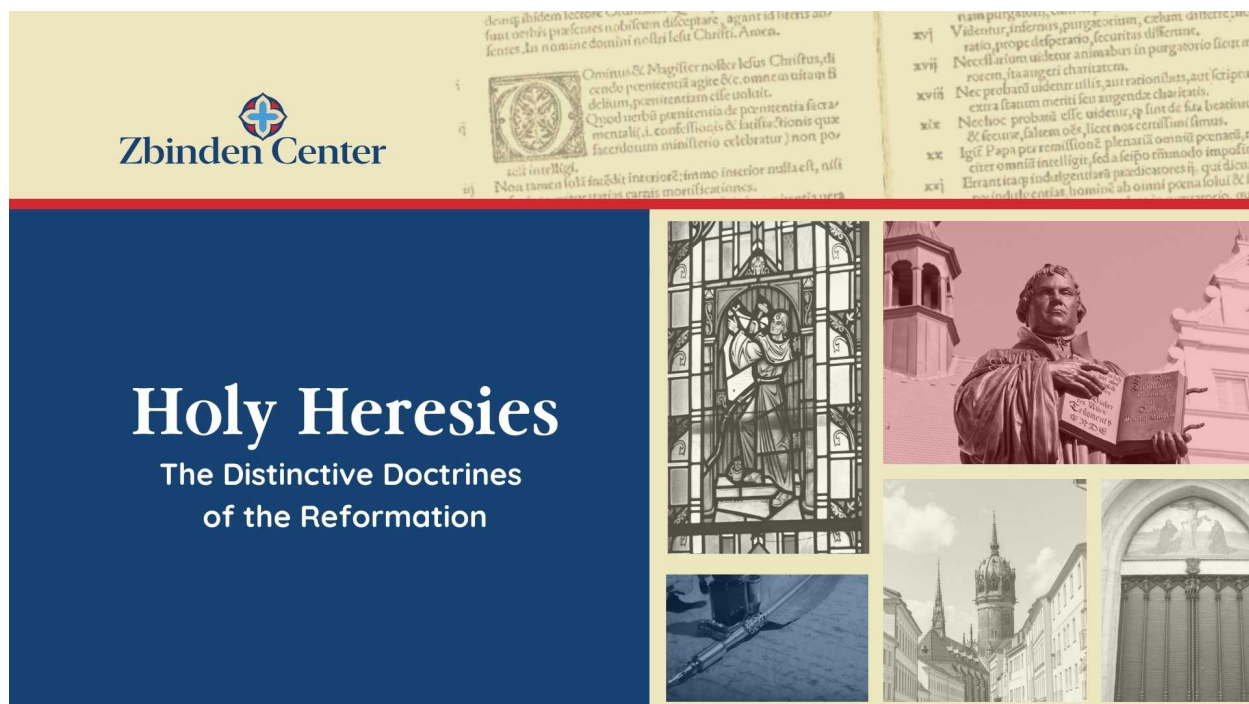




HOLY HERESY 4: FAITH ALONE (SOLUS FIDE) MARCH 19 / 20, 2025

I. THE BASES OF PERSONAL FAITH

- a. *“What is the chief end of man?” To Glorify God and Enjoy Him Forever.*
- b. John 15:4-7: ⁴ *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
- c. ENJOYING= ABIDING: A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.
- d. Definition of personal faith (not *sacramental, institutional, cultural, or familial*).
- e. The importance of understanding faith as personal in the Reformed tradition.
- f. Overview of the three bases: God is personal, salvation is personal, and faith is personal.

II. GOD IS PERSONAL

- a. God is not a concept but a person.
 - i. The Bible and confessions describe God in personal terms.
 - ii. God’s presence in Scripture is relational and personal.
 - iii. The Trinity as the ultimate expression of relationship.
- b. Jesus Christ as the personal revelation of God.
 - i. John 14:9 – “He who has seen me has seen the Father.”

- ii. The Gospel is about a person, Jesus Christ, not just a philosophy or moral code.
 - iii. Paul's teaching in Romans 1:1,3 – The Gospel is the good news of Christ's coming.
- c. The Holy Spirit as a personal presence.
 - i. The Spirit is not an abstract force but a person.
 - ii. Described in personal terms in Scripture.
- d. The call to relationship.
 - i. God is a "Thou," not an "It" (Martin Buber's concept).
 - ii. Jesus taught us to pray to "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9).
 - iii. Paul: We cry out "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).
 - iv. John 15:15 – Jesus calls His disciples "friends."

III. SALVATION IS PERSONAL

- a. Election is personal.
 - i. Reformed theology insists on God's personal care for individuals.
 - ii. Calvin's teaching: Predestination is God's eternal decree for each person.
 - iii. B.B. Warfield: Salvation is not generic but particular.
- b. The Reformed view: God's sovereignty and love for individuals.
 - i. "People matter to God" (Mark Mittelberg & Bill Hybels).
 - ii. Calvin: God's saving work is directed at individuals.
 - iii. Karl Barth: Every person is particularly chosen in Christ.
- c. Jesus as the personal Savior.
 - i. Christ's work applies to individuals, not just to humanity as a mass.
 - ii. The Kingdom of God reorients people without overriding personal identity.
 - iii. Barth: Christ became a servant "just for him" (each person in particular).

IV. FAITH IS PERSONAL

- a. Faith is a personal response to God's love.
- b. The Confession of 1967: God created humans for personal relationship with Him.
- c. Faith is not merely intellectual assent but trust in Christ for oneself.
- d. The Reformation's rediscovery of personal faith.
- e. Martin Luther: Sola Fide (Faith Alone).
- f. Faith as an individual's trust in God's grace, not church sacraments or works.
- g. Luther's experience of personal salvation (Romans 1:16).
- h. Luther on Faith and Works.
 - i. *On the Freedom of a Christian (1520): "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."*
 - ii. *Preface to Romans (1522): "Faith is a divine work in us that changes us and makes us to be born anew of God... Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly."*
 - iii. *Lectures on Galatians (1535): "Thus faith is a divine work in us that changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. It kills the old Adam,*

makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it."

- i. Faith must be experienced.
 - i. Luther's conversion: Moving from fear of God's justice to love for God's grace.
 - ii. "If you have true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God."
 - iii. Faith as both belief and trust.
 - iv. Barth: Salvation is "for me" – faith means knowing Christ's work applies personally.
- V. FAITH IN THE REFORMED TRADITION
- a. The Great Awakening and the emphasis on "religion of the heart."
 - b. Karl Barth: God's revelation confronts each person individually.
 - c. The Confession of 1967: Salvation is a personal crisis and present hope.
 - d. John Leith: The role of evangelism is to help people see how Christ answers their deepest questions.
- VI. KEY CONTRIBUTIONS of *Sola Fide* to the Concept of a Personal Relationship with Christ
- a. Direct Access to God through Faith.
 - i. *Sola Fide* teaches that faith in Christ alone is sufficient for justification, removing the necessity of priests or Church rituals as intermediaries (Romans 5:1).
 - ii. This personal trust in Christ fosters a direct, relational approach to God, where believers interact with Him not through prescribed Church actions but through their own faith.
 - b. Emphasis on Christ as the Sole Mediator
 - i. The Reformers, particularly Martin Luther and John Calvin, stressed that Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5).
 - ii. This personal reliance on Christ, rather than on the Church's sacramental system, reinforced the idea of a one-on-one relationship with Him.
 - c. Faith as Trust, Not Just Intellectual Assent
 - i. Martin Luther described faith not merely as belief in doctrine but as a *personal trust* in Christ's sufficiency:
 - ii. "*Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times.*" (Preface to *Romans*, 1522)
 - iii. This deep, personal trust in Christ naturally developed into the modern language of having a personal relationship with Him.
 - d. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Faith
 - i. *Sola Fide* highlights that faith is a work of the Holy Spirit, not human effort (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - ii. The Reformers taught that the Holy Spirit not only grants faith but also indwells believers, leading to ongoing personal communion with Christ (Galatians 2:20).

- e. Personal Bible Reading and Devotion
 - i. The Reformation's push for Scripture in the vernacular enabled individual believers to read, understand, and apply God's Word personally.
 - ii. This fostered the idea that each Christian could grow in a direct relationship with Christ through personal study and prayer, rather than relying on Church authorities for spiritual growth.
 - iii. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647):
 - 1. *"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love."* (WCF 11.2).

VII. CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

- a. Modern evangelical Christianity often speaks of "accepting Christ into one's heart" or "walking with Jesus daily," ideas deeply rooted in *Sola Fide*'s emphasis on personal faith.
- b. Prayer, Bible reading, and personal worship are seen as essential components of maintaining a relationship with Christ, rather than merely attending Church or participating in sacraments.
- c. The assurance of salvation based on faith alone (rather than works) provides confidence in a secure and intimate relationship with Christ (John 10:27-28).

VIII. CONCLUSION: THE PERSONAL NATURE OF FAITH

- a. Christianity is not just a culture or philosophy, but a relationship with a person.
- b. Faith is personal but not private – it leads to engagement in the world.
- c. Reformed theology emphasizes that faith must be more than personal, but never less than personal.