



INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE
TO PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS WORLDWIDE

Newsletter

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"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."
(James 2:26 ESV)

By Faith Abraham Obeyed *Prof. Ralph Boersema*

As the IRTC joins Kingdom people of the world in thanking the Lord for 500 years of Reformation, it is natural that we reflect on the central truth that we are saved only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For this doctrine to impact our lives, we do well to reflect on the nature of faith. Let us start by observing that faith is knowledge, conviction, and trust.

Faith is knowledge because you need to know someone if you are to believe in him. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." This is God's word of power that makes Christ known to us and works faith in us.

In addition to knowing someone or something, you need to be convinced of the truth of this knowledge. James argues in his letter (2:19), "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" They shudder because they know God and are convinced of his righteous majesty and their own guilt. Nevertheless, they do not have living faith, because an essential element is still missing.

Faith is true faith only if the knowledge and conviction is accompanied by entrustment of yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hebrews 11:17 reads, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. . . . Abraham's true faith

obeyed the Lord because it believed God's trustworthiness.

Express Your Trust

Abraham clearly shows us how faith is expressed in obedience. The father of all who believe (Rom 4:11) expressed his faith, not only in the sacrifice of his son, but also in obeying the call to go to the land the Lord would show him (Heb 11:8) and in keeping all God's requirements, commandments, and laws (Gen 26:5). Faith itself is, in fact, obedience to the command to believe (Rom 1:5; 16:26; 1 John 3:23).

The Reformation highlighted the biblical teaching that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law (Gal 2:16). In the context, "works of the law" means self-righteousness, the mistaken belief that a sinful man can be righteous in God's sight on the basis of works he performs. The truth, however, is that any attempt of a person to contribute to his own justification only increases his debt of sin. The Good News is that Christ, the Son of God, shed his blood as the ONLY EFFECTUAL offering for sin and we can receive the benefits of this sacrifice to make them our own, only by faith in Christ.

As did Abraham, we also must express this faith by obedient works. It is a mistake to regard every use of "works" in the New Testament as meritorious. That would mean, for example, that Galatians 5:6 would say that what matters is faith

working merits through love—the very opposite of what the text really says. The basic meaning of the terms that express "working" is simply "doing" or "activity." In this sense, even faith itself is work, something we do (John 6:29).

Work Out Your Faith

Faith is never inactive. It is not possible to abstract faith from its work. What is faith if it is not expressed in human activity (including hearing and thinking)? The Reformer, John Calvin says in the *Institutes*, III, 11, 20, "Indeed, we confess with Paul that no other faith justifies 'but faith working through love' [Galatians 5:6]. But it does not take its power to justify from that working of love. Indeed, it justifies in no other way but in that it leads us into fellowship with the righteousness of Christ."

The only way you can express faith is through prayer, praise, repentance, mourning over sin, turning away from it to Christ, confessing his name, and expressing your trust in living, active obedience.

Without looking to justify yourself through works, trustingly and joyfully exercise penitent, active, obedient faith that expresses itself in love, through boldly abounding in works that God has prepared for you beforehand, that you may walk in them (Eph. 2:10)! Let the living faith of our forefathers, described in Hebrews 11 be your inspiration!

Author Description and Testimony



Prof. Ralph Boersema, Th. M. is the president of the IRTC. He served as a missionary in Brazil for 20 years, on behalf of Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church, together with other supporting Canadian Reformed Churches. Now living in Bristol, VA, USA, both he and his wife, Lucille, are much involved in the College on a daily basis. Boersema is the author of *Not of Works*.

Testimony: "Eighteen years of working with the IRTC has united patience with 'pressing on'. When the beginning of the College came with much misunderstanding of our intentions and the failure of expected partnerships to materialize, it became necessary to seek funds from other sources and to depend much on volunteer services and part-time personnel. Ever since, the work has been done by brothers and sisters who do their teaching and accomplish other services for the IRTC in addition to their first responsibilities. Very busy people put in much effort, but often cannot accomplish all that they would like. Also, communications in a virtual community do not work as efficiently as when full-time people can talk face to face. Such a setting calls for patience. Nevertheless, the Lord has strengthened us to press on and to keep on pressing on. Much has been developed in order to offer good-quality programs of study. More is underway. May the Lord be pleased to count us worthy to provide sound biblical training for ever-increasing numbers of leaders in his church! May he always keep us true and faithful to his infallible word of grace!"

New Vice President for Student Affairs

Prof. Ralph Boersema, President

With great joy and gratitude to God, I can announce that the board of directors recently appointed a new vice president of student affairs, Rev. Giovan Amaral Casteluber. Prof. Casteluber. He has been part of our college family for some time as a tutor of several students and also is enrolled in one of our masters programs. He knows the day-to-day life of the students, teachers and staff and also is able to have a student's perspective of things.

After 20 years of working in the area of cards and finances, Rev. Casteluber was ordained to the ministry of the Word in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and now has 13 years experience serving in the Pampulha Presbyterian Church (Belo Horizonte, MG). In addition to his training in theology, he is also trained in administration. In addition, he served as a hospital chaplain.

Here is a description of the areas of action that the board is assigning to the office of vice president of student affairs:

The vice president of student affairs looks after the interests of the student body and the students individually, so that their experiences in the College become the best possible they can possibly be within a virtual learning environment. He assists them in navigating the roads and defends their cause, always pointing them to the best people to deal with matters for which the students need assistance, when these are not directly within his competence.

As a chaplain, he promotes the spiritual and devotional life of the students within the College, always respecting the

principle that the College only provides assistance to the churches of the students and understands that they are the ones that take priority in the pastoral care of the spiritual life of the students. For this, he can schedule and follow the IRTC's devotional activities, watching over the spiritual life of the whole community. He suggests sermons or books that help students develop a high-level of spiritual life and always gives guidance and practical tips on habits that promote good study.

It is also incumbent upon the vice president of student affairs to oversee and follow up on the representation of the student body; to assist spiritually and minister pastoral counseling to seminary students, teachers and staff; to walk along side and stimulate seminary students in their practical internships in the churches; to encourage and to guide the formation of local study centers and tutors; to follow-up on the students in their studies, seeking to receive from the teachers names of students with difficulties or names of those who are behind on their assignments with the intention of exhorting them or helping them in their difficulties.

In the case of reports of plagiarism or misbehavior on the part of the students, it is up to the vice president of student affairs to follow up and provide legal assistance to the student.

In cooperation with the vice president of academic affairs, he should also guide students in the selection of courses and disciplines, annually reviewing their academic progress to avoid school dropouts and help students complete their courses.

Brother Casteluber, welcome to your new role. Trusting in God and in all faithfulness to His holy Word, we are here for you, along with all those who are part of the fellowship of the IRTC.

Financial Status – July 2017 Update

Daniel Portela, Executive Vice President

In July the IRTC was greatly blessed by receiving a large donation that has brought our financial situation into positive territory for this time of the year. We rejoice in the Lord and are very thankful for this blessing. These specific donors have supported our ministry for a number of years and are impressed by the work that the Lord is accomplishing among us. They join us in encouraging new donors to come forward and make it possible for the IRTC to fully meet our budgeted needs for the months of August through December.

Our organization is still in need of your generosity to make up the missing **\$15,850** for the year so we can continue to offer accessible and competitive prices for reformed theological training in the Portuguese language.

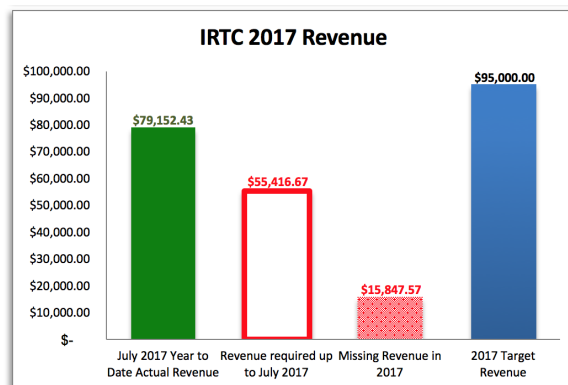
If the Lord has moved you to contribute financially with any amount, please visit the “Donations” page on our website (www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm), and there you will find all the information necessary for making your contribution in the USA. Canadian donors, please make your donations at www.irtcsociety.ca.

The following are other ways in which you can help the IRTC:

1. Pray for the IRTC, its teachers, leadership, students, and financial situation.
2. Refer prospective students to the IRTC.
3. Share this newsletter to disseminate the work and the needs of the IRTC.

We are thankful to the Lord for all the brothers and sisters who so generously contribute financially to the IRTC.

In Him who provides for us all.



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