

The Five Solas

What are the “five solas,” and what do they mean? The five solas state that Christians are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

The “five solas” is a term used to designate five great foundational rallying cries of the Protestant reformers. They are as follows: “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture Alone); “Sola Gratia” (Grace Alone); “Sola Fide” (Faith Alone); “Solus Christus” (Christ Alone); and “Soli Deo Gloria” (To God Alone Be Glory). These “five solas” were developed in response to specific perversions of the truth that were taught by the corrupt Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church taught that the foundation for faith and practice was a combination of the scriptures, sacred tradition, and the teachings of the magisterium and the pope; but the Reformers said, “No, our foundation is sola scriptura”.

The Catholic Church taught that we are saved through a combination of God's grace, the merits that we accumulate through penance and good works, and the superfluity of merits that the saints before us accumulated; the reformers responded, “sola gratia”.

The Catholic Church taught that we are justified by faith and the works that we produce, which the righteousness that God infuses in us through faith brings about. The reformers responded, “No, we are justified by faith alone, which lays hold of the alien righteousness of Christ that God freely credits to the account of those who believe”.

The Catholic Church taught that we are saved by the merits of Christ and the saints, and that we approach God through Christ, the saints, and Mary, who all pray and intercede for us. The Reformers responded, “No, we are saved by the merits of Christ Alone, and we come to God through Christ Alone”.

The Catholic Church adhered to what Martin Luther called the “theology of glory” (in opposition to the “theology of the cross”), in which the glory for a sinner's salvation could be attributed partly to Christ, partly to Mary and the saints, and partly to the sinner himself. The reformers responded, “No, the only true gospel is that which gives all glory to God alone, as is taught in the scriptures.”

Today, the Catholic Church teaches the same essential perversions of truth; and much of Protestantism has seen a regress to many of the same corruptions, in many circles and denominations. It is a pressing need for Christians everywhere to reaffirm and champion anew the “five solas” which underlay and gave impetus to the Protestant Reformation.

SOLA GRATIA

"Grace Alone"

Salvation from the judgment and condemnation of God that every human being deserves (because we are sinners) is a gift of grace from God. It has nothing to do with human merit. A central cry of the Reformation was salvation by grace. Though the Roman church taught that Mass is a “sacrifice [which] is truly propitiatory” and that by the Mass “God...grant[s] us grace and the gift of penitence, remits our faults and even our enormous sins” -- the reformers returned to the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. Our righteous standing before God is imputed to us by grace because of the work of Christ Jesus our Lord. In contrast to the doctrines of self-merit taught by Rome, sola gratia and the accompanying doctrines of grace -- total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, and perseverance of the saints -- were preached by all the reformers throughout the Protestant movement. As the Baptist Confession of 1689 says, “Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified; and did, by the sacrifice of himself in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf;...their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.”

As the Scripture says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. (Ephesians 1:3-8)

Romans 3:10-12*

"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together, they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." God Himself, through His Son Jesus Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, rescues all who believe in Him from His wrath. God brings people to repentance and faith in Christ because of His goodness and grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

SOLA FIDE "Faith Alone"

The biblical truth that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions in the world. It is not by the believer's works or efforts but by Christ's work on the cross that a person is saved.

The "Material Principle" of the Reformation was justification by faith alone. As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." The Genevan Confession likewise pointed out the necessity of those justified living by faith saying, "We confess that the entrance which we have to the great treasures and riches of the goodness of God that is vouchsafed us is by faith; inasmuch as, in certain confidence and assurance of heart, we believe in the promises of the gospel, and receive Jesus Christ as he is offered to us by the Father and described to us by the Word of God (Genevan 11).

As the Scripture says, Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:6-11)

Romans 4:4-5

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Christ, who lived a perfect, sinless life, willingly bore the full punishment of the wrath of God against believers. He paid the penalty in full. Therefore, those whom God brings to faith in Christ are saved because He imputes Christ's righteousness to them.

Romans 5:8-9

But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.

SOLUS CHRISTUS "Christ Alone"

The Reformation called the church back to faith in Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. While the Roman church held that "there is a purgatory and that the souls there detained are helped by the intercessions of the faithful" and that "Saints are to be venerated and invoked;" "that their relics are to be venerated" -- the reformers taught that salvation was by Christ's work alone. As John Calvin said in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, "Christ stepped in, took the punishment upon himself and bore the judgment due to sinners. With his own blood he expiated the sins which made them enemies of God and thereby satisfied him...we look to Christ alone for divine favour and fatherly love!" Likewise the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 30 asks, "Do such then believe in Jesus the only Saviour who seek their salvation and happiness in saints, in themselves, or anywhere else? They do not; for though they boast of him in words yet in deeds they deny Jesus the only deliverer and Saviour: for one of these two things must be true that either Jesus is not a complete Saviour or that they who by a true faith receive this Saviour must find all things in him necessary to their salvation."

As the Scripture says,^[SEP]There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time...For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. (1TI 2:5-6; COL 1:13-18)

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Salvation is found in Christ alone. No human being can forgive sins. It is Christ alone who saves.

Romans 10:9

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Acts 4:12

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

SOLA SCRIPTURA **"Scripture Alone"**

The 66-book Bible is the sole authority for Christians in faith, doctrine, and practice. Sola Scriptura acknowledges the facts that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant, sufficient, without error, and the source of all truth. The doctrine that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority was the "Formal Principle" of the Reformation. In 1521 at the historic interrogation of Luther at the Diet of Worms, he declared his conscience to be captive to the Word of God saying, "Unless I am overcome with testimonies from Scripture or with evident reasons -- for I believe neither the Pope nor the Councils, since they have often erred and contradicted one another -- I am overcome by the Scripture texts which I have adduced, and my conscience is bound by God's Word." Similarly, the Belgic Confession stated, "We believe that [the] holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein...Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures nor ought we to consider custom or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God... Therefore, we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule" (VII).

As the Scripture says, Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law....I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, And give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; For Thou hast magnified Thy word according to all Thy name....You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (Psalm 119:18; Psalm 138:2; II Tim. 3:14-17)^[SEP]□

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

SOLI DEO GLORIA **"To the Glory of God Alone"**

The Reformation reclaimed the Scriptural teaching of the sovereignty of God over every aspect of the believer's life. All of life is to be lived to the glory of God. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." This great and all consuming purpose was emphasized by those in the 16th and 17th Centuries who sought to reform the church according to the Word of God. In contrast to the

monastic division of life into sacred versus secular perpetuated by Roman Church, the reformers saw all of life to be lived under the Lordship of Christ. Every activity of the Christian is to be sanctified unto the glory of God.

As the Scripture says, ^[1]_[SEP]Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God; Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (1CO 10:31; 1PE 4:11; REV 1:6; 2PE 3:1; EPH 3:21; REV 7:12; ROM 11:36) ^[1]_[SEP]

Titus 3:4-5

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Salvation is wholly a work of God for His glory. Believers contribute nothing to their salvation. Because Christ is both Lord and Savior of believers, they are commanded to live their lives to glorify God.

John 6:44

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."
It is God who, through His grace, moves in the sinner's heart, enabling him or her to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.