

# The Five Solas of the Reformation

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If you have spent any amount of time in theological studies, you most likely have run across the phrase "the Five Solas of the Reformation." Over the next few weeks, we plan to work through the Five Solas of the Reformation so that we might understand some of what the Reformation brought to church theology.

The Five Solas are identified as:

*Sola Gratia*, by Grace alone

*Sola Fide*, by Faith alone

*Sola Scriptura*, by Scripture alone

*Solus Christus*, Through Christ alone

*Soli Deo Gloria*, Glory to God alone

However, these doctrines did not develop all at once to begin the reformation, but over time and through the work of many students of God's Word.

## Background

To understand the Five Solas, we must first understand where they came from. The five Solas stem from the Protestant Reformation of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the church was primarily the Roman Catholic Church. While the Reformation is customarily dated to have begun October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Whittenburg church, in reality, the seeds of the Reformation were sewn many years earlier by men such as Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, and John Wycliffe.

Jan Huss<sup>1</sup> was a Czech theologian and as most theologians of the day a Catholic Priest. He lived during the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries serving both a local church pastor and professor in the university. He was very vocal against the church clergy for how corrupt and morally bankrupt they were. He even went as far as calling out the Pope from the pulpit of the church he pastored. Hus was also very vocal about the practice of Indulgences in which the Pope would grant eternal life to certain people in exchange for something of value. Hus also taught against priests and bishops taking up arms to defend the church. There were at the time several Catholic Orders which were essentially armies, such as the Knights Templar. These teachings of Hus had a profound effect on several men and groups of men many years later, including Martin Luther and Alexander Mack. Hus spoke out often against the church sponsored crusades into the Holy Land.

John Wycliffe was an Englishman who was one of the earliest reformers. He lived in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. As a Catholic Priest, he also became involved in English politics. He was appointed by King Edward III to represent the English crown in discussions with the Vatican concerning the differences between the Vatican and the English. The Pope frequently issued Papal Bulls, or decrees, against him and the positions he took from the pulpit. Undeterred by the Pope, Wycliffe wrote extensively against the Pope and the Church. Wycliffe was perhaps the

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<sup>1</sup> "Jan Hus | Bohemian Religious Leader," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Hus>.

<sup>2</sup> "John Wycliffe | English Theologian," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Wycliffe>.

most outspoken of the reformers in his support for the predestination of believers by God which led to his teaching concerning the "Invisible Church," which was what he called all of the people predestined for salvation by God. He was most vocal concerning the Catholic teaching of "transubstantiation." This is the teaching that the Eucharist actually becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ and is a conveyor of God's Grace.

These men and many others began a discussion in many different locations in which they questioned the Roman doctrine of Grace and Scripture. In fact, the early reformation focused much on just three of the Five Solas, *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, and *Sola Gratia*. These doctrines stemmed from the abuse of the Church of Rome and the fact that Rome had become very corrupt and even anti-biblical. "*By most accounts, negligence, ignorance, absenteeism, and sexual immorality were widespread among the clergy and taken for granted by lay people*<sup>3</sup>." The Roman Catholic Church controlled both the religious and political world of Europe. Islam was pushing west, and the church of Rome had become very militarized and used the military to keep Kings, Queens, and the common man in line with the desires of Rome. This included Rome's Spiritual teaching, which held as much authority as the Word of God. This was not difficult for Rome since most people could not read, and most priests never studied the Word of God.

Wycliffe was the first to bring the bible to the common person through his English translation of Scripture. The re-invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg, about 1445, also contributed to the rise of Biblical literacy and the recognition that Rome was not teaching proper doctrine. The first complete book printed by Gutenberg was the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

Martin Luther<sup>5</sup> was born in Germany in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. He also was a Catholic Priest who had many conflicts with the teachings of Rome and the Pope. He, as most reformers were, was an outspoken critic of the sale of indulgences. As he studied the Word of God for himself while working on the book of Romans, he concluded God saves people solely by grace and not through any work on their part. This, of course, was clearly in contradiction to Catholic Doctrine and the sale of indulgences, which was a source of great income to the Church. Luther's conflict with the Vatican came to a head when he nailed 95 theses to the door of the church he served in Whittenburg Germany. He did not intend to start a new religious system but to reform the church from within. However, before long, he was excommunicated, and no longer a priest.

It was into that environment that these early reformers began to teach about Grace alone, *Sola Gratia*, Faith alone, *Sola Fide*, and Scripture alone, *Sola Scriptura*. No longer could they tolerate a Pope who claimed his word was infallible and equal to the Word of God. No longer could they tolerate any teaching which was different from God's grace being given to us through faith. To that was added *Sola Christus*, through Christ alone and *Soli Deo Gloria* to God's glory alone.

Over the next few weeks, we will study each of these Solas and the theology of each of them.

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Dowley, ed., *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 352.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>5</sup> "Martin Luther | Biography, Reformation, & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther>.



## Sola Gratia

As we saw in the background information, the reformers rebelled at the sale of indulgences and the dispensation of grace through the sacraments. Particularly Martin Luther, who discovered while reading Paul's epistle to the Romans that salvation comes through God's Grace alone, Sola Gratia.

## Indulgences

The definition of an Indulgence is:

*In the Roman Catholic Church, pardon for temporal punishment still due to sin after the guilt has been forgiven. The commutation of penance and the grant of absolution are based on the principle of vicarious satisfaction by which the sinner draws on the spiritual treasury formed by the surplus merits of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints to replenish his or her own bankrupt account. The authority for granting indulgences is vested in the pope, who may delegate this power to others.<sup>6</sup>*

When Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the door of the church in Whittenburg, he was not calling for a reformation. He was simply calling for a theological discussion on the sale of indulgences. In Luther's time period, indulgences were called the "the Holy Trade."<sup>7</sup> As the reformers continued to teach against the indulgences, they became a scandal for the church and the object of a great deal of acrimony. Initially, indulgences were intended to relieve a sinner of harsh penance imposed earlier by a priest. This original teaching became perverted to the place that the Pope could sell an indulgence and absolve a sinner from guilt and purgatory. Luther saw this a real issue for the church harmful to human salvation.

The common feeling in the church at the time was that purgatory was the place to be feared. Hell was not feared as most people believed that if they were baptized in the church and received the sacraments, they ultimately would end up in heaven. However, purgatory was where they would have to serve temporary punishment. The populace genuinely feared that period of punishment in purgatory and purchased indulgences for themselves and their families. The church became a business selling salvation and avoidance of punishment. To further these sales, the church emphasized that before church members could get to heaven, they would have to be cleansed of every sin in purgatory. Indulgences would dramatically shorten the time in purgatory or eliminate it altogether. Indulgences were originally given to church members who had done works within the church, been Godly in their worldly affairs and had suffered physically in this life. By the time of Luther, however, no longer did an indulgence require certain actions or piety. Indulgences were sold, sometimes for large sums of money.

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<sup>6</sup> George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Dowley, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, 366.

Luther recognized that indulgences were not taught in Scripture. He saw no reason to continue to teach that the Pope had the keys to hell and heaven and could determine who would go to heaven or hell. He began to rebel and was eventually excommunicated from the church. His excommunication would lead to a rebellion by some of the monarchs of Europe which were in some ways subservient to the Pope at the time. This rebellion led to some of the monarchs being called protestants or protesters. The Reformation had begun or at least had become public.

Central to the Reformation was Martin Luther's teaching that a sinner is justified by Grace Alone (Sola Gratia). Luther saw that the Catholic doctrine had become that grace was received through works within the church and the sale of indulgences. However, as he read the works of the Apostle Paul, he came to realize that Scripture teaches no such thing. Scripture teaches that God alone gives grace.

## Definition of Grace

The Tyndale Bible Dictionary defines grace as:

*The gift of God as expressed in his actions of extending mercy, loving-kindness, and salvation to people.*

*Grace is the dimension of divine activity that enables God to confront human indifference and rebellion with an inexhaustible capacity to forgive and to bless. God is gracious in action. The doctrine of divine grace underlies the thought of both the OT and NT. However, the OT merely anticipates and prepares for the full expression of grace that becomes manifest in the NT.<sup>8</sup>*

This clearly is taught in Scripture.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)*

*8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which*

*God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them<sup>9</sup>*

*Titus 3:4-7 (ESV)*

*4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 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, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Wesley Elwell, Walter A.; Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 550.

<sup>9</sup> All Scripture quotes is from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted

*Acts 15:11 (ESV)*

*11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. '*

*Galatians 1:15 (ESV)*

*15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,*

*Romans 3:24 (ESV)*

*24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

These and many other passages present the doctrine of Grace. A free gift, given by God to His chosen people to provide them eternal life.

Within the New Testament, "Grace" is the most common translation of the Greek word: χάρις (charis). This word had common usage in the Greek world to speak of a phenomenon or feeling. It meant "to rejoice" or "to be merry"<sup>10</sup>. It ultimately becomes used in secular Greek to speak of "favor" shown by rulers, which is how the word is used in the verses above. We should note at this point that "grace" is a theological doctrine found in scripture that causes Christianity to be quite different from all other religious systems past and present. All other systems focus on man appeasing the gods to obtain mercy. However, with Biblical Christianity, man receives grace from God as a free gift. God is providing for man rather than man earning from God.

We should also note that Grace generally speaks of God's activity rather than to His nature. The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible states:

*Although God is gracious, this trait of his nature is revealed only in relation to his created works and to his redemptive enterprise. In other words, grace is to be understood in terms of dynamic expression of the divine personality rather than as a static attribute of God's nature. Grace is the dimension of divine activity that enables God to confront human indifference and rebellion with an inexhaustible capacity to forgive and to bless. God is gracious in action.<sup>11</sup>*

The doctrine of Grace is what underlies both the Old Testament and the New Testament. There is a very poor belief by many that the Old Testament only anticipates grace and that salvation in the Old Testament was only through the keeping of the law. While much of the time of the Old Testament falls within the dispensation of the law, salvation was not through the keeping of the law. Salvation has always been through God's grace freely given to those chosen by God to receive it. Old Testament saints had to trust God to care for them and provide for them, just as New Testament saints do. In effect, Old Testament Saints anticipated the cross while New

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<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey William Kittel, Gerhard; Friedrich, Gerhard; Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 1985.

<sup>11</sup> Barry J. Elwell, Walter A.; Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 898.

Testament saints look back to the cross. While anticipating salvation being provided by God, they had no understanding of how it would come, and they had no understanding of "Jesus on the Cross." However, for God, who stands outside of time and space, such a difference is not an issue.

*Genesis 6:8 (ESV)*

*8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*

Favor in this verse is the Hebrew word (bén) which is translated both as grace and as favor.

*Psalms 136:1-2 (ESV)*

*136 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. 2 Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

The Old Testament also uses another word for the concept of Grace, and that is חֶסֶד (hesed). This word is translated as mercy, kindness, loving-kindness, favor, and several others as well. In Psalm 136, it is translated as "Steadfast Love." This word is used more than 200 times in the Old Testament, much of the time in the Psalms. There is no direct English equivalent to this word which results in the various translations seen in the Old Testament. This word carries the idea that God's chosen people, Israel in the Old Testament, have a covenant relationship with God, and as a result of the relationship, God has a certain loyalty to them. This loyalty is displayed by what he does for them, in His loving Kindness, His mercy, and His Grace. God is committed to those He has chosen and provides for them what they could not provide on their own. That is the very definition of Grace. This covenant love has a sense of mutual accountability to it. God has made promises to His People, and His chosen people expect Him to keep His promises. God also expects His chosen to keep their promises as well. The history of Israel reveals they were no better at keeping their end of the covenant relationship that we are at keeping our promises.

## Grace Alone

As Martin Luther and other Church Reformers began to study Scripture for themselves, they realized that salvation was not the result of anything other than God's Grace, which resulted in the Reformation theme of Sola Gratia (Grace Alone).

## Grace is Part of the Character of God

Most often, when we think about Grace, we think about something we receive, or perhaps give to another. We think of it in terms of it being a commodity that can be given to another or even sold as in the sale of indulgences. However, the reality is that Grace is a description of an effect of the character of God. That character is then displayed by God through His gifts to men and women, boys and girls.

God predestined us to the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself so that He alone is glorified. He did that freely without expense or cost on our part. It is God's very nature or the character itself that allows God to be gracious to us. However, God's grace is not just shown to us

in His salvific efforts, which are limited to His chosen people. God also displays what has been called "Common Grace" to all, chosen and not chosen alike. This is seen in God's gift to humanity of good health, the ability to work and prosper, good weather to enjoy, a system of taste buds to allow you to enjoy your food, and many other ways that God has provided for all humanity, worldwide and independent of time. In fact, life itself is a gift of God's Grace.

*Genesis 2:15-17 (ESV)*

*15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die..."*

*Romans 6:23 (ESV)*

*23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The Apostle Paul states that the free gift of God is eternal life immediately after saying the wages of sin is death. Life itself is a gift from God since we all deserve to be executed for our crimes. However, God allows us to live, even after our sin. God demonstrated His character of grace by giving life to Adam and Eve, breathing it into their nostrils.

*Genesis 2:7 (ESV)*

*7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

Even after they sinned, God continued to demonstrate grace to them.

*Genesis 3:21 (ESV)*

*21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

Rather than execute Adam and Eve for their sin, God sacrificed an animal and used the skin of the animal for a covering for Adam and Eve, demonstrating his grace again.

It was God's Grace that most frustrated Jonah. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach the Good news of God's Word to them. Jonah knew that God was gracious and would end up saving the Ninevites. But Jonah did not want them to be saved; he wanted them to be killed.

*Jonah 4:1-2 (ESV)*

*4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster."*

We can go from cover to cover in the Bible and find account after account of God's grace being given to mankind in general and certain people specifically. Grace clearly reflects who God is.

## Grace is Clearly Displayed by the Cross of Jesus

We have pictures of God and His grace all through the Old Testament, but it is not until the New Testament that grace is fully defined for us. We have already seen that the wages of sin is death, Rom 6:23.

*Romans 3:23 (ESV)*

*23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

The reality is that all have sinned and are deserving of death. God's grace cannot be displayed with any better picture than the cross of Christ and the imputation of righteousness that comes from the cross. God's holiness requires punishment for the sin of man. God's grace provides a way for His Holiness to be satisfied through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. From His Virgin birth through His life, death, burial, and resurrection, the life of Jesus is a demonstration of God's Grace.

*Hebrews 2:9 (ESV)*

*9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the **grace of God** he might taste death for everyone.*

Through Jesus' sacrifice, God was just to pronounce us clean and to view us in the righteousness of Jesus.

*Romans 3:24 (ESV)*

*24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

The justification by God then enables God to adopt us as joint heirs with Jesus.

*Titus 3:7(ESV)*

*7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Every aspect of salvation is by God's plan and through His grace. So intertwined is grace in our salvation that these two words, Grace and Salvation, are often used interchangeably.

## Grace is Expressed in Different Ways

We have already been introduced to the term "Common Grace." It is viewed as the benevolence that God has to all mankind. This form of God's Grace is completely independent of spiritual condition.

*Matthew 5:45 (ESV)*

*45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Sunshine and rain are benevolent gifts from God. We all receive them, completely independent of our spiritual condition and standing before God.

*Acts 14:16-17 (ESV)*

*16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*

God is sovereign but also allows free will, a discussion for another time, as seen here in Acts 14:16. Free will is a gift from God so that mankind is not programmed but free to decide for himself. Man has the ability to make his own choices and decisions, a grace given to man by God. In creation, God could have created man programmed to respond a certain way, much like "Alexa." But God gave each person certain instincts and desires and the freedom to do as they desire. All the while, God remains completely sovereign, and knowing exactly what will happen.

"Saving Grace" is another form of God's Grace. This form is more specific than Common Grace. Saving Grace is precisely what the name implies, the provision God has given through the cross of Jesus for our salvation.

*Acts 15:11 (ESV)*

*11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans detailing the process of God's Grace, securing our salvation. He summarized it in these verses:

*Romans 8:28-30 (ESV)*

*28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Those verses show us God's salvific efforts began before we were created and end in the yet future when we are physically resurrected or glorified. This chain also reflects another type of God's Grace, and that is "Securing Grace." Securing Grace is the aspect of God's grace that provides for us "eternal life." God does the securing, not we ourselves.

*Romans 5:1-2 (ESV)*

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

There is also "Sanctifying Grace." Sanctifying Grace is the work of God in the lives of the believer to bring about growth and development of the believer. This growth results in maturity for the believer.

*Philippians 1:6 (ESV)*

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Another aspect of God's Grace is often referred to as "Provisional Grace." Provisional Grace is God providing for our need and caring for each of us.

*James 1:17 (ESV)*

*17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

Some scholars also call the spiritual gifts given to Christians a type of grace, "Serving Grace."

*1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)*

*10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:*

In this verse, the word "gift" is the Greek word χάρισμα (charisma), which is a form of the word we translate Grace, χάρις (charis). God's giving us gifts is a form of God's Grace.

*Ephesians 4:7 (ESV)*

*7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

The final type of grace is "Sustaining Grace." Sustaining grace is the work of God in your life to help you get through the struggles and suffering that come with being a follower of Jesus.

*2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)*

*9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

## Grace is Pure

Grace can only be viewed by itself and never in concert with anything else. If anything is added to grace, it is no longer grace. Grace can only be pure and never a compound.

*Romans 4:4-5 (ESV)*

*4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

*Romans 11:6 (ESV)*

*6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

Grace is only the work of God and not ever the work of man. It is not based on the work man does or attempts to do.

J.I. Packer describes Grace this way:

*What is grace? In the New Testament grace means God's love in action towards men who merited the opposite of love. Grace means God moving heaven and earth to save sinners who could not lift a finger to save themselves. Grace means God sending His only Son to descend into hell on the cross so that we guilty ones might be reconciled to God and received into heaven. '(God) Hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Corinthians 5:21).<sup>12</sup>*

There is absolutely no contribution from man that combines with God's Grace to provide salvation to man. In fact, when man attempts to "help" God and add to God's Grace, it becomes an affront to God. Grace requires nothing from man, and God will not accept anything from man. If man could contribute to grace, it would no longer be grace but would be payment for the work done.

## Grace is Sovereign

Since we cannot demand grace from God, and we cannot contribute to God's grace, it must be completely and entirely an act of God and His sovereign thought.

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<sup>12</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 226.

*Exodus 33:19 (ESV)*

*19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*

*Romans 9:15-16 (ESV)*

*15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. " 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, **but on God. who has mercy.***

The thought of God sovereignly acting to provide grace to some and not to others is problematic for some. Immediately preceding the two verses above from Romans 9, Paul asks a question. Can God be just when He gives grace to some but not to others?

*Romans 9:14 (ESV)*

*14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!*

So how do we deal with this issue and question? To answer the question, we have first to determine what justice would be.

*Romans 3:23 (ESV)*

*23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

*Romans 6:23 (ESV)*

*23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

All have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Logic then dictates that since all have sinned and the wages of sin is death that all are deserving of death. So, for God to be just, He should execute every man, woman and child because all have sinned. If God were to be just, then, we would all be executed. But grace is a different character trait of God than justice. Grace does not operate on the same basis as justice does.

Grace means that God does not give us what we deserve but what He delights in giving to us. Injustice on God's part would be God withholding benefits we are entitled to, in effect wages. C.I. Scofield said:

*Grace is not looking for good men whom it may approve, for it is not grace but mere justice to approve goodness. But it is looking for condemned, guilty, speechless and helpless men whom it may save, sanctify and glorify.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Scofield is quoted by William McDonald, *The Grace of God* (Oak Park- Ill.: Midwest Christian Publications, 1960), p. 6.

We do not know on what basis God chooses some for salvation. We do know that God made this choice before creation.

*Ephesians 1:4-5 (ESV)*

*4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, It is for "His Will" that God chooses those He chooses.*

*Ephesians 1:11-12 (ESV)*

*11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

God chooses so that He ultimately is glorified. He does not choose because of anything we have done or will do. It is strictly for His glory and by His sovereign plan.

## Grace in Relation to the Law

The law is clearly displayed in the Old Testament as the standard of righteousness. But since no one could perfectly keep the law, it could not deliver righteousness. Only God's Grace can deliver righteousness. The law was never intended to be a means of obtaining grace. The law was given to man to demonstrate to man his need of grace from God who is violated when we sin.

*Romans 3:19-21 (ESV)*

*19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

*21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— (ESV)*

God's law reveals to man his need for salvation, his need for God's grace. As Paul told the Romans, knowledge of sin comes from the law, righteousness cannot come from the law. But this fact has not stopped man from trying to manipulate the law to provide righteousness. We see this in the church in the form of legalism. Legalism is a system in which men seek to become righteous by the strict keeping of the law as adopted by man.

Legalism is almost always external in nature, which means that it is focused on actions and not attitude or motives. Legalism also tends to lower the standards given by God. We see Jesus work against this within the Pharisees when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt 5:17-48)

## Grace is Given to the Humble

*James 4:6 (ESV)*

*6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

*1 Peter (ESV)*

*5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Who benefits from the Grace of God for salvation? Those who acknowledge that they are devoid of the ability to save themselves, incapable of keeping the law, and who acknowledge their dependency on God to save them. To acknowledge your own inadequacies while acknowledging God's ability to save you is to be humble. This is very difficult for men to do and takes a work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to humility and acceptance of the work of God in our lives.

## Sin is an Occasion for Grace, Grace is Never an Occasion for Sin

God's gift of forgiveness and Grace is often abused by Christians. Many Christians have the improper belief that since God will forgive them and continue to give them grace, they can do what they want to do.

*Romans 5:20 (ESV)*

*20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

This verse is used by the Christian to create the false premise that the more they sin, the more grace will be given so they can sin as much as they want. But the Apostle Paul does not move on to another topic here; he continues in chapter 6.

*Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)*

*6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

By no means, Paul says, are we to sin more so grace will abound. Grace is not a license to sin; it is what God gives us despite our sin.

*1 Peter 2:16 (ESV)*

*16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

Since grace is given to those, who acknowledge that they cannot save themselves and must depend on God to save them, Grace cannot be viewed as a license to sin more.

## Grace Must be Viewed in Concert with God's Other Attributes

God grants grace to those He chooses to grant it to within the bounds of His righteousness, Holiness, and justice. God cannot violate one of His attributes to exercise another attribute. The grant of grace by God is not at the expense of any of His other attributes. It is completely possible that God grants grace while at the same time maintaining His justice, holiness, and righteousness, even while grace seems to be at odds with justice.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)*

*21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Grace, alongside Justice, came through the sacrifice of Jesus, who was uniquely qualified to serve as our substitute.

*Romans 3:24-25 (ESV)*

*24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

To understand what the Apostle Paul is teaching here, we must understand the word "propitiation" as used in this verse. It is the Greek word ἱλαστήριον (hilasterion). As used in Scripture, this word means the satisfying of God's holy Law, the meeting of its just demands, so that God can freely forgive those who come to Christ.<sup>14</sup> By God sacrificing Jesus on the cross, He meets the standard of Justice by paying the price Himself. Jesus' blood shed on the cross was the price God paid for our sins. This truth was illustrated hundreds of years earlier in the book of Leviticus, chapter 16. In this chapter, Moses gives the Hebrews the instruction for the "Day of Atonement."

*Leviticus 16:6-10 (ESV)*

*6 "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. 7 Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. 9 And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.*

Being properly dressed for this occasion, the High Priest was to offer a sacrifice for himself and his family, which included all the priests. He then would present two goats at the gate of the

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<sup>14</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 523.

Tabernacle. Lots would be cast over the goats to determine which would be sacrificed and which would be set free out of the camp. The goat set free out of the camp, Azazel, symbolized the carrying away of the sins of the people from the camp.

By the Cross of Jesus, God established the possibility of forgiving sins while at the same time maintaining His Holiness and His justice. God's grace was given to those He chose to receive that forgiveness.

## Grace is at the Same Time both Positive and Negative

We most often think of grace in positive terms, a gift given to us by God. God's unsolicited, unmerited gift to those without the power to save themselves. The totality of these gifts is not always seen or even known. Sometimes it is seen but not recognized as Grace. Sometimes God's Grace comes in the form of pain and suffering.

*Philippians 1:29 (ESV)*

*29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,*

While in our English text, the word grace is not found in this verse, it is clearly seen in the original Greek. The word "granted" in the ESV translation is the Greek word *éxctp[00T1* (echaristhé). This is the verb form of the word (charis) Grace. This means that Paul is saying that our suffering is also a gift from God. God sends trials and suffering our way to perfect us and to draw us to Him.

*James 1:2-4 (ESV)*

*2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

We recognize that God is gracious to us by what He gives us. We should also consider that He is gracious in what he does not give us. For example: In the Garden of Eden, God provided for Adam and Eve food from every tree in the garden, except one. That was a positive gift to them. But God also told them they could not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Satan enticed them to think of themselves and not recognize all that God had given, they looked at this one provision as something to be obtained for themselves. God's prohibition of eating from the one tree was an act of grace. They did not understand, and Satan did not tell them how gracious God was in His prohibition of eating from the one tree because when they did eat of that tree, the pain and consequences were significant, and resulted in a fundamental change to the entire universe. God clearly is good in what He gives to us and just as good in what He does not give us, and what He takes away from us.

## Grace Conclusion

God's grace is an important theme throughout God's Word, both Old and New Testaments. One Scholar describes that God's Grace is:

*"like the melody line of a beautiful song. As a rule, only one note carries the melody, and all of the other notes serve to compliment that note with a harmony. I believe that grace is the dominant note in God 's dealings with man. His justice, His holiness, His omnipotence, and His omniscience are all an integral part of the music of His character and activities, but grace stands apart and above them all."<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> "8. The Grace of God, Part I (Ephesians 1:5-12; 2:1-10)," *Bible.Org*, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/grace-god-part-i-ephesians-15-12-21-10>.



## Sola Fide

Sola Fide is a reference to the teaching of justification which is received by faith alone, by grace alone. In the scope of the "Five Solas," Sola Fide is the teaching presented by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:28.

*Romans 3:28 (ESV)*

*28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

## Justification

The doctrine of Justification is central to Christian Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation. The Apostle Paul is the Chief writer concerning Justification, but the doctrine also appears within the other biblical books. Justification is also central to Luther's objection to Roman Catholic doctrine which permitted and perhaps encouraged that sale of indulgences and sacraments.

The Moody Handbook of Theology states, "...forgiveness is the negative side of salvation; justification is the positive side"<sup>16</sup>. Since salvation is a work of God and not man himself justification then is a positive work of God in which God makes a forensic declaration. It is a legal act in which God declares the sinner who trusts in God to be righteous. This declaration of righteousness is not based upon anything that man does but entirely based on the work of Jesus and His sacrifice.

*Romans 4:6-7 (ESV)*

*6just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;*

God freely gives justification to the believer through God's grace.

*Romans 3:24-26 (ESV)*

*24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

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<sup>16</sup> Enns, Paul P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989.

The sacrifice of Jesus provides God with the legal right to declare righteous those He desires to declare righteously. It is entirely based on the work of Jesus. Jesus' righteousness is credited to our account. When God views us, He sees us through the filter of Jesus' righteousness. We have not been made righteous, we have been declared righteous.

*Romans 4:5(ESV)*

*5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

*Romans 5:9 (ESV)*

*9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

"Justification is manward; man had sinned and broken God's standard. Man needed receiving the righteousness of God to enter into fellowship with Him."<sup>17</sup> Sinful man has absolutely no way to justify himself and must completely depend on God's declaration of righteousness. It is a final and complete adjudication by God of the eternal status of the believer. J.I. Packer in Concise Theology states:

*God's justifying decision is the judgment of the Last Day, declaring where we shall spend eternity, brought forward into the present and pronounced here and now. It is the last judgment that will ever be passed on our destiny; God will never go back on it, however much Satan may appeal against God's verdict (Zech. 3: 1; Rev. 12:10; Rom. 8:33—34). To be justified is to be eternally secure (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:30)<sup>18</sup>*

We can't lose the justification given to us by God through the sacrifice of Jesus; it is eternal.

## Faith

*John 1:12 (ESV)*

*12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*

*Acts 16:31 (ESV)*

*31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

These and many other verses in Scripture make clear that the only responsibility that man has in his own salvation is faith. But what is faith? What does it mean to "believe?" "Faith may be succinctly defined as "confiding trust."<sup>19</sup> In the study of scripture, it has been determined that

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<sup>17</sup> Enns, Paul P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989.326

<sup>18</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 165.

<sup>19</sup> Enns, Paul P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989.332

the Apostle John uses the word "faith" in a similar way to the way the Apostle Paul uses the words "believing in Christ." "*Saving faith, however, is not mere intellectual assent to a doctrine; it involves more than that. Saving faith involves at least three elements.*"<sup>20</sup> These three elements are knowledge, conviction, and Trust.

**Knowledge** is focused on the intellect dealing with the facts that must be believed for salvation. These facts include the deity of Jesus, man's sinfulness, Jesus' sacrifice, along with the bodily resurrection of Jesus. These minimal facts are based upon the words of Jesus Himself.

*John 8:24 (ESV)*

*24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.*

*John 20:30-31 (ESV)*

*30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

In verse 31, the Apostle John gives the indication that his reporting of the life and times of Jesus was to provide us with a means to salvation.

**Conviction** involves our emotions. Knowledge emphasizes the intellectual awareness of the truth, while conviction emphasizes the inner conviction of the truths.

*John 16:8-11 (ESV)*

*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because of the ruler of this world is judged.*

It is the idea that the Holy Spirit speaks to our heart, and we not only know something is true, but we feel it is true as well.

**Trust** is the result of our head and heart knowledge of the truths of the gospel. Trust results in the moving of our will, a decision made and acted upon as an act of our will.

*Romans 10:9 (ESV)*

*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.*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 332

## Origin of Faith

We begin with the idea that we cannot please God on our own.

*Romans 8: 7-8 (ESV)*

*7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

The natural man is unregenerate and does not have the capacity to please God or even have faith in God. Our natural flesh is in hostility to God.

*Romans 8: 7 (ESV)*

*7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile** to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*

*Colossians 1:21 (ESV)*

*21 And you, who once were **alienated** and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,*

*John 3:3 (ESV)*

*3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

So far removed from God and His world, we cannot even see it without the help of God Himself.

*Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)*

*2 looking to Jesus, **the founder and perfecter of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The author of the book of Hebrews clearly states that Jesus is the originator of our faith. Faith begins with God. The author then states that Jesus is also the perfecter of our faith, which means that Jesus not only begins faith within us, He also brings it to a successful conclusion. The successful conclusion of our faith means that Jesus will bring us to be with Him for eternity.

*Romans 12:3 (ESV)*

*3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to **the measure of faith that God has assigned**.*

Jesus created a way for us to have faith, which God has granted to us.

*Romans 10:17 (ESV)*

*17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Faith is a gift we receive from God through His Word. Moses stood before the burning bush and received faith as He listened to the words coming from the burning bush. How could a man trained with all the knowledge of Egypt stand there and watch a bush, burning yet not consumed, believe what he was seeing? It was through the words of God that Moses understood and had faith.

*Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)*

*8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*

There has been considerable debate among theologians and Greek scholars concerning what the demonstrative pronoun "this" refers to. In the original Greek "this" is neuter but both Grace and Faith are feminine, which lead us to conclude that "this" does not refer to either specifically. What seems much clearer is that "this" refers to the entire subject in context, salvation. The entire context, salvation, is the gift of God. This would indicate that our faith is also a gift from God since it is not of our doing. God's grace is manifest in our faith, which was initiated by Jesus and will be brought to a successful conclusion by Jesus, eternity with Him.

We should conclude that the origin of Faith is God, and it is given to us as a gift. It is not something we create or conceive of. Faith comes from God and not from us, which leads to the ultimate conclusion that salvation is the gift of God and not anything that we accomplish.

## What Does Faith Do?

"Faith is but the channel, the instrument, by which this righteousness of Christ comes on to me,"<sup>21</sup> writes D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his work, *Great Doctrines of the Bible Vol II*. Lloyd-Jones goes on to say, "God does it like this. He gives us the new birth; He gives us this power and faculty of faith, and then He enables us to exercise it."<sup>22</sup> This is clearly seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

*Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)*

*8 For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*

The faith given to us by God along with the ability to utilize that faith brings us, by God's power, to the place where God justifies us. This does not mean that our faith is the same thing as our righteousness. When faith is at work within us, and we turn to God, trusting Him to save us, God justifies us with the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus, who is completely righteous before the law, died to provide God with a legal and just way to view us as righteous also.

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<sup>21</sup> David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 176

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 176.

*I Corinthians 1:30 (ESV)*

*30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,*

Faith provides the vehicle for God to move us from unbelief to belief, through which He then justifies us and imputes Jesus' righteousness to us. Faith gives us a way to accept what He has done on our behalf. Martyn Lloyd-Jones states:

My faith makes me lean entirely on the Lord Jesus Christ. And, knowing that God has imputed His righteousness to me, I know that all is well between me and God. I believe His declaration. My faith accepts it. He has put to my account the perfect, spotless, seamless robe of righteousness of his dear Son. That is the biblical and the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith only.<sup>23</sup>

To more fully understand what faith does, we need to explore Hebrews chapter 11, sometimes referred to as the Hall of Faith. The author of the Book of Hebrews begins with:

*Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)*

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

This prolog to the discussion that follows provides us a glimpse into where the author is heading. He sets forth the idea that faith, which we have already learned comes from God, provides us assurance of what we are hoping for. The words "hoped for" are one word in Greek,

ομένων (elpizomenōn) which carries the meaning of expectation, trust, and even patient waiting. The modern concept of hope is full of doubt and question, embodying a desire but not a surety. That is the opposite of Biblical Hope. Biblical Hope contains the idea of patiently waiting for God to accomplish all that He has said He will do. So, when the author of the book of Hebrews states that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for," he is saying that the person of faith trusts God to do what God said He will do, and that is translated into how that person acts and lives.

The author of the book of Hebrews goes on to state that not only does faith provide Biblical Hope, it also provides to us a conviction which may be in conflict with what we see and experience in our world. Faith, given to us by God, allows us to believe what seems unbelievable to the world. Faith does not depend on facts or observation to trust and depend on God but can depend on God absent facts and observation.

## Dimensions of Faith

As we study Scripture, there appear to be three dimensions of faith. These dimensions are covenantal faith, epistemological faith, and eschatological faith. It also appears that these dimensions or types of faith overlap and more than one may be seen in the same passage.

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<sup>23</sup> Dav'id Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 178

### *Covenantal Faith*

The Old Testament provides many examples of covenantal faith. We see several covenants between God and the Chosen People of Israel. These covenants required the people of Israel to trust or have faith that God will keep His end of the covenant. Of course, many of this covenant also required the people to remain faithful to God, and often they did not, yet God always remained faithful to them. This can be seen in:

*Joshua 24:14-15 (ESV)*

*14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*

Covenantal faith expresses the commitment to following and being obedient to the Lord in response to His commitment to us.

### *Epistemological Faith*

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge; epistemological faith deals with the dimension of faith that does not require observational knowledge. Epistemological faith provides the believer with to ability to interpret the world, and with the ability to trust God even when the "facts and observations" would argue against it.

*2 Corinthians 5: 7 (ESV)*

*7for we walk by faith, not by sight.*

*"With this phrase, he refers to Christians ' capacity for a kind of spiritual perception that allows them to interpret the world in a godly way. God's people are able to see and perceive His work in the world, while the rest of the world ignores or rejects it."*<sup>24</sup> The Apostle Paul makes it clear that as Followers of Jesus we can trust God and His Word, even when that trust or faith seems unwarranted. Interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 as depicting a literal six twenty-four hour day of creation within the past 10,000 years is an example of epistemological faith. Modern science makes for some a convincing argument that the world is much older and creation occurred over millions and billions of years. A proper reading of the Biblical text reveals it to be much more recent and much shorter period.

### *Eschatological Faith*

While the follower of Jesus depends on faith to actively see the world in a godly way, they also have a need to see the future in a godly way. The eschatological dimension of faith provides the follower of Jesus with the ability to trust God for the future as well as the present. In the first

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<sup>24</sup> Nijay K. Gupta, "Faith," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul clearly teaches that human understanding has been corrupted. (Rom 1:18-32) This reality necessitates that God's provision of faith also provides us with faith concerning the future. God has promised to us eternal life. He then gives us the faith to trust Him for that future. The faith given to us by God includes the ability to trust God for tomorrow as well as today.

## Is Sola Fide Important?

Martin Luther describes "Sola Fide" as "the article with and by which the church stands." Luther states this in the Preface to the "forty-five theses" drawn up in 1537. Luther further states in this preface "The article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrines; it preserves and governs all Church doctrine and raises up our conscience before God. Without this article, the world is utter death and darkness." John Calvin held a similar position when he states that justification is "the main hinge upon which religion turns." Clearly to the reformers, Sola Fide, and Justification are critically important Biblical doctrines. But it is not just the reformers who held to the importance, the Apostle Paul did as well.

*Galatians 1.9 (ESV)*

*9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

What was the gospel that the Galatians had received? A study of the book of Galatians reveals that Paul had taught them, and the Galatians responded to, the teaching of salvation by faith without works.

*Galatians 3:6-11 (ESV)*

*6 Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?*

*7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed. 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

*10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith.*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

*Romans 4:4-5(ESV)*

*4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.  
5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly,  
his faith is counted as righteousness,*

Paul here clearly reminds those who seek to earn their own justification through their own actions or a mix of faith and work only receives what they are due. Paul also says:

*Romans 6:23 (ESV)*

*23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ  
Jesus our Lord.*

The result of working for your salvation is you will be paid your wages, which is death. Dr. David Platt, President of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Denomination, states:

*"Salvation by faith alone is the best news we could possibly hear or deliver. If we lose that, we lose everything. So let us rejoice in that salvation, and let sola fide ring out from our lips in the church and among the lost until the day when such faith finally becomes sight." <sup>25</sup>*

In this same article, Platt states that Martin Luther had called on pastors to take back their churches and to "*beat it into their heads continually*" the doctrine of Sola Fide.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, Platt and Luther hold that "Sola Fide" is critically important. The reality is that if we are not saved by God's work alone, then we are not saved and have no hope for salvation.

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<sup>25</sup> David Platt, "Sola Fide—A Doctrine To Be Beaten Into Your Head Continually," International Mission Board, October 10, 2017, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.imb.org/2017/10/10/sola-fide-changes-everything/>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid



## Sola Scriptura

The next of the Five Solas is Sola Scriptura, which means Scripture alone. Sola Scriptura articulates the principle that Scripture is sufficient as our supreme authority in all spiritual matters. Dr. John MacArthur states: "*Sola Scriptura simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture. It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture.*"<sup>27</sup>

The Apostle Peter states:

*2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)*

*19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,*

Peter says that the Word of God, the "prophetic word," is more fully confirmed. Peter is reminded of his being present during the Transfiguration in which he and James and John saw the future. For Peter, the Transfiguration made the future sure, especially after the resurrection of Jesus. Peter was convinced that what God had written in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament was true and factual. No other confirmation is needed.

Sola Scriptura does not make the claim that everything Jesus or the Apostles taught is contained in Scripture. MacArthur states: "It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture " (2 Peter 1:3)<sup>28</sup> In the Historical Brethren tradition it is stated "the Bible, the Whole Bible and nothing but the Bible" in our historical approach to the Christian Life. This same idea is carried forward into the current statement of the Charis Alliance, the Commitment to Common Identity Section 2 (The Evangelical Core" Item 4 The Bible as well as Section 3 (Our Charis Identity: The Shared Commitments of our Global Movement) Item 1.<sup>29</sup> The Brethren historically have refused to adopt creeds or written traditions. Historic Brethrenism came out of a culture in post-reformation Germany in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century in which tradition and creeds held the same authority as scripture. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henry Holsinger led a movement of separation in the German Baptist Brethren from the movement that had allowed the decisions of the Annual Conference to hold as much weight as scripture. The resulted in the three-way split of 1879-1882 which resulted in the Church of the Brethren, the German Baptist Brethren, and the Brethren Church.

Sola Scriptura also teaches that nothing can be added to or taken away from Scripture. Moses stated this in Deuteronomy:

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<sup>27</sup> John MacArthur, "What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?," Ligonier Ministries, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-sola-scriptura-mean/>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> "Our Commitment to Common Identity\_(ENG\_v2015.0\_Letter).Pdf," n.d., accessed March 5, 2019, [http://charisalliance.org/documents/ccci/Our\\_Commitment\\_to\\_Common\\_Identity\\_\(ENG\\_v2015.0\\_Letter\).pdf](http://charisalliance.org/documents/ccci/Our_Commitment_to_Common_Identity_(ENG_v2015.0_Letter).pdf)

*Deuteronomy 4:2 (ESV)*

*2 You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.*

*Deuteronomy 12:32 (ESV)*

*32 "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.*

The Apostle John, the last of the Apostles, wrote in Revelation:

*Revelation 22:18-19 (ESV)*

*18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

Moses, as the first writer of scripture, and John, the last writer of scripture, have created bookends to scripture warning that nothing can be added, and nothing removed from it. The Word of God stands on God's authority and does not need anything from man to corroborate it or support it. It stands alone based upon the Divine Author and not the human authors.

Scripture came to man directly from God.

*2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)*

*16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*

God provided to the human authors of Scripture exactly what He wanted them to write. That is the meaning of "breathed out by God." That is inspiration.

*2 Peter 1:21 (ESV)*

*21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Peter reinforces Paul's teaching. Peter states that men spoke as they were "carried along by the Holy Spirit." The words "carried along" is the Greek word φερόμενοι (pheromenoi) which is the same word used by Dr. Luke in the Book of Acts in talking about the ship the Apostle Paul was on being carried along by the winds in the sails. God gave the Biblical Writers the exact words to write that revealed what God wanted to convey while maintaining the individual author's own vocabulary and writing style, along with their experience. Only an omniscient, omnipotent God could write exactly what He wanted using the words of others. But that is exactly what Scripture is.

Sola Scriptura became one of the critical points for the reformers in response to Roman and the Eastern Church's elevation of tradition and Papal statements to that of Scripture. As men like Martin Luther began to study scripture directly and not church books, they realized that, in many areas, the church was teaching something completely different than what scripture taught. Luther's primary concern was in the area of justification by faith alone, Sola Fide. Luther recognized that he could not be saved through a mixture of faith and good works. Luther struggled with the question of what the final authority to turn to for spiritual questions. The Roman church was teaching that the Church was the final authority. The Magisterium, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the official and authoritative teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is the final authority. William G. Most writes: "*The task of authoritatively interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on [Scripture or Tradition], has been entrusted exclusively to the living Magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.*"<sup>30</sup> He also states "A "theologian" who would claim he needs to be able to ignore the Magisterium in order to find the truth is strangely perverse: the teaching of the Magisterium is the prime, God-given means of finding the truth."<sup>31</sup> While this writing is more than three hundred years later than the teaching that Luther dealt with, it carries the same false doctrine that led to the reformation.

Scripture is the final authority, not the church or any man or group of men. Luther attempted to correct the false doctrine from within the Roman church until he was excommunicated from it. As Luther faced excommunications he is quoted as saying:

*"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen."*<sup>32</sup>

In the "Ten Conclusions of Berne", the report of a group in Berne Switzerland in 1528 who sought to reform the Roman Church the following statement is perhaps the most direct statement of Sola Scriptura: "*The Church of Christ makes no laws or commandments apart from the Word of God; hence all human traditions are not binding upon us except so far as they are grounded upon or prescribed in the Word of God.*"<sup>33</sup>

At the heart of Sola Scriptura is the recognition that mankind is fallen, and as fallen, mankind has an issue with authority. Basically, man does not want to submit to the authority of anyone else. We simply need to look at what transpired in the Garden of Eden and the fall. The sin of Adam was at its base the rejection of God's Word. God had told Adam:

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<sup>30</sup> "The Magisterium or Teaching Authority of the Church," accessed March 5, 2019, <http://www.eMn.com/faith/Teachings/chura4.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> "Scripture Alone: Re-Affirming the 'Material Principle' of the Reformation," accessed March 5, 2019, <http://www.midamerica.edu/news/74/scripture-alone-re-affirming-the-material-principle-of-the-reformation>.

<sup>33</sup> "Sola Scriptura Definition," accessed March 5, 2019, <http://mvw.biblestudy.org/Beginner/definition-of-christian-terms/sola-scriptura.html>.

*Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV)*

*16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

God's Word, directly from God. Yet Satan Challenged God's Word in:

*Genesis 3:1 (ESV)*

*3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.*

*He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden ' ? "*

In the next verse in chapter 3, Eve misquotes God's Word:

*Genesis 3:2-3 (ESV)*

*2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.*

Adam acquiesced to Eve's direction and the false representation of God's Word and took the fruit and ate from it, plunging the entire universe into sin and entropy. The account of the fall serves as a good example of what distortion of God's word leads to. Even without the sin nature, Adam rejected the authority of God, abdicating his own authority as the spiritual leader of his home and subjected himself to the false teaching of his wife and Satan. We can then trace this same story through the entire Old Testament.

But that is not the only way that the authority of God's Word is rejected. In our modern churches, we often hear people make statements such as "this scripture means to me," with the idea that as the reader, they get to determine what scripture means. **At no time does the reader get to determine what is written means.** The author is the only one who determines what something means. To test this hypothesis, one simply needs to take the bill they receive at their local restaurant and argue that to them the writing on the ticket means 10% of what is written. That would not be acceptable and would likely cause you to be in trouble with the law. **God did not give us His Word for us with a fluid meaning.**

It is the job of the Bible Student and the Bible Teacher to properly exegete scripture so it can be properly interpreted and applied to the student. Exegesis is the process of examination of Scripture, often referred to as hermeneutics in which the student examines a Biblical text systematically. There are many systems of hermeneutics, with the two primary systems being Allegorical and Literal. These two systems comprise the range of hermeneutics systems.

The Allegorical system of hermeneutics holds that scripture is to be interpreted as a symbolic representation. The meaning of the actual words are not taken in their normal sense but in a symbolic sense. Allegorical interpretation leaves the door wide open for students to find scripture

to teach many things that it does not actually teach. Charles Ryrie in his Basic Theology text states: "If used consistently, allegorical hermeneutics would reduce the Bible to near-fiction, for the normal meaning of words would be irrelevant and would be replaced by whatever meaning the interpreter gives to the symbols."<sup>34</sup> Ryrie quotes F.W. Farrar, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Church of England theologian:

*Allegory by no means sprang from spontaneous piety, but was the child of rationalism which owed its birth to the heathen theories of Plato. It deserved its name, for it made Scripture say something else than it really meant. ... Origen borrows from heathen Platonists and from Jewish philosophers a method which converts the whole of Scripture, a like the New and the Old Testament, into a series of clumsy, varying, and incredible enigmas. Allegory helped him to get rid of chiliasm and superstitious literalism and the "antitheses" of the Gnostics, but it opened the door for deadlier evils.<sup>35</sup>*

The literal interpretation, often referred to as the "literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic," is the opposite end of the spectrum from allegorical. This system of Biblical interpretation strives to determine what the original writer meant when the text was written and what the original readers would have understood when first reading the text. This requires the student to use the literal meaning of words unless it is obvious that the words are used in an allegorical fashion. Such as the word "sunrise." The use of sunrise does not reflect that the writer of Scripture believed the sun rotated around the earth and actually rose in the morning and set in the evening. Sunrise is a word that reflects the observational view of the writer in that it appears the sun rises. So, the normal way to understand someone writing sunrise would be used, just as it is used in common use.

The "literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic," also requires the student to be aware of how words change their meaning over time. This results in the student then needing to interpret the word as the writer would have understood it at the time of writing, which requires a knowledge of history. This system of hermeneutics also requires that the interpretation of a passage of scripture not conflict with other passages of scripture. God presents a unified, consistent message from Genesis through Revelation, and the interpretation of a passage must fit within that consistent unified message.

When proper hermeneutical principles are not followed, the text can be made to say whatever the reader or teacher desires. As we have already seen, the writer of the text is the one who sets the meaning of the text. When sinful, fallen man sets the meaning of the text, God's unified and consistent message is distorted. This perhaps seen most prominently in Genesis 1-11, the account of creation through the tower of Babel. It is clear that these chapters conflict with what modern science teaches, and since modern science is held to a higher status than the Word of God, proper exegesis of these chapters often does not occur. When the literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic, is applied to these chapters of Scripture, the resulting view is that the earth is

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 126.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 126

relatively young, less than twenty thousand years, closer to ten thousand years. But since modern science demands billions of years of age of the earth, exegetical principles are changed to allow the text to conclude billions of years.

One example of this is the use of the Hebrew word יום (yöm), which is translated as "day. The Literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic rules result in this word being used in this passage to speak of a literal 24 hour day. Just as with our English "Day", there are many uses of the word יום (yöm). It can mean a 24-hour period of time, it can mean the daylight time, and it can mean an era or age. The immediate context determines how the word is to be understood. A good student of God's word would use the context to aid in how to interpret the text. In a study of the text, the student would notice that several times in the text יום (yöm) is used with a number, as in day 1, day 2, day 3, and so on. Through a proper study of the entirety of God's Word, the student would learn that at no place in scripture is the word יום (yöm) used directly with a number mean anything other than a literal 24 hour period of time. This means that either Genesis chapter 1 is unique in Scripture and the use of the word (yöm) or that the use of the word יום(yöm) here refers to a literal 24 day. But creation in six 24 hour days is inconsistent with modern science. So many modern scholars have argued that יום (yöm) in chapter 1 of Genesis means something else, such as long periods of time or eras. Other scholars, seeking to accommodate the years science requires, take the Genesis 1 account as allegorical, which results in the interpretation that God is not relaying what actually happened but what a simple man could understand.

If Biblical text concerning creation can be manipulated to accommodate the ever-changing field of science, how can it be counted on to properly teach salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone? It is only through the proper hermeneutical exegesis of the text reflecting what God said that proper doctrine can be learned and taught.

To properly understand the Word of God, the student must use the proper technique of interpretation. This requires the student to have a linguistic and grammatical understanding of the text, as well as a historical understanding of the text. Add to this an understanding of how the passage being studied fits into the rest of God's Word. Nothing can be placed as important or as high a level as the Scripture itself. Scripture alone is sufficient for our teaching in doctrine and theology, for our understanding of who God is and what He has provided us in salvation.

## Solus Christus

Solus Christus is the teaching that reemerged during the reformation that holds that Salvation is only made possible for man by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Solus Christus stands at the very center of all other "solas" doctrines. Solus Christus is really the only way these other doctrines are connected to each other. We come to know Jesus through the pages of scripture, written by God through the pens of men. It is in the pages of scripture that we read of faith in Jesus and God's Grace. Ultimately so we can provide glory to God, which is the last of the "Five Solas" "Soli Die Gloria."

The writers of Scripture at the direction of God place Jesus at the center of God's plan for creation and salvation. Jesus Himself testified to the fact that He alone provides salvation.

*John 14:6 (ESV)*

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

The Author of the book of Hebrews also places Jesus at the center of all things.

*Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)*

*1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

Herman Bavinck states:

*.'The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the central point of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious-ethical life of Christianity. '36*

Paul said to his young apprentice:

*1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)*

*5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*

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<sup>36</sup> "Solus-Christus-What-the-Reformers-Taught-and-Why-It-Still-Matters.Pdf," n.d., accessed June 11, 2019, <http://equip.sbts.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/Solus-Christus-What-the-Reformers-Taught-and-Why-it-Still-Matters.pdf>.

That is the very definition of Solus Christus. Ulrich Zwingli, an early reformer stated: "*Our only comfort, redeemer, savior, and mediator with God is Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom alone we can find grace, help, and salvation.*"<sup>37</sup> Both the Apostle Paul and Reformer Zwingli proclaim the same position, salvation is through no other means than Jesus Christ. Solus Christus is essentially a proper understanding of Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

## Soteriology

The title "Soteriology" comes from the Greek words for Salvation σωτήρ (sötér) and Word λόγος (logos), the word or study of salvation. Charles Ryrie states: "*Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, is one of the grandest themes in the Scriptures.*"<sup>38</sup> In defining the scope of Soteriology Ryrie states:

*From God's perspective, salvation includes the total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification, from death to eternal life, from alienation to filiation. From the human perspective, it incorporates all of the blessings that being in Christ brings both in this life and the life to come.*<sup>39</sup>

Scripture presents salvation in three tenses, past, present, and future. As a Charis Fellowship Church in the Historic Brethren tradition, we display the past, present, and future tenses of salvation in our three-fold communion service. During the three-fold actions of the communion service, we celebrate the past aspect of our salvation in the bread and cup, which memorializes Jesus action on the cross. The present aspect of salvation is celebrated in the washing of feet memorializing the daily cleansing from sin we receive, also called progressive sanctification. The future aspect of salvation is displayed in the (agape) love fest, which looks forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. All too often, salvation is only seen in the past aspect and not the present and future aspects.

## Motives For Salvation

Why would God want to save those who had become His enemy? Why would God go through the separation and pain of the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, for people that did not, and could not love Him? Those are questions that are often asked by theologians studying Soteriology. Within Scripture, three reasons why God would want to save sinners are found.

The first of these reasons is God's Love.

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<sup>37</sup> "SOLA: Solus Christus I Moody Church," n.d., accessed May 21, 2019, <https://myw.moodychurch.org/solus-christus/>.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 318-319.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 318-319

*John 3:16 (ESV)*

*16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*Romans 5:8(ESV)*

*8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Salvation is the clearest demonstration of God's love and His capacity to love. In the statement the Apostle Paul makes to the Romans above, notice that "His Love" is in the present tense, which means that it is ongoing, continuing on today. Notice also that "died" is in the past tense. Jesus died once for all, not a continual sacrifice. Israel had a practice of bringing a sacrificial lamb every year. But Jesus' death was sufficient at the time it occurred and remains fully effective today and forever.

The second reason is that salvation displays God's Grace throughout all of eternity.

*Ephesians 2:7(ESV)*

*7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Charles Ryrie states: "Each salesperson will be a special trophy of God's grace forever. Only redeemed human beings can provide this display"<sup>40</sup> The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans reminds them that Pharaoh, during the plagues of Exodus, was raised up so that God's power could be on display.

*Romans 9:17 (ESV)*

*17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.*

In the very same manner, God desires to demonstrate God's Grace through each one of His children for eternity.

The third reason for God granting salvation to His chosen is to provide a people who would do good works He prepared for us to do.

*Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)*

*10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Salvation creates a person who is created for good works to be accomplished. These good works have been prepared by God for each of us beforehand. It should be pointed out that the word

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<sup>40</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 320.

"workmanship" is the Greek word ποίημα (poiéma) which speaks of a work of art or as a masterpiece. We have been created by God a masterpiece, with a purpose of accomplishing what God has directed.

## The Importance of Salvation

The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Rome, a church he did not start and had not yet been to:

*Romans 10:14-15 (ESV)*

*14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

Paul here articulates that the preacher, the witness, are links used by God between the unregenerate person and God Himself. Each of us has the responsibility to display God's grace to us to others. We have a responsibility to accurately reflect God and the salvation He alone brings to the world.

*Acts 4:12 (ESV)*

*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.*

*John 14:6 (ESV)*

*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 only through and by the power of Jesus Death and resurrection. There is no other way in which a person can be saved. It is important for us to be clear about that and teach only that.

## Anthropology as it Relates to Soteriology

In order to properly understand soteriology, we must first understand anthropology, specifically as it relates to man's position before God and his inability to save himself. While the topic of anthropology covers a great deal more than we will focus on here, we are only concerned with the reality that man is a fallen enemy of God and lacks any ability to save himself.

### *Origin of Depravity*

Why did Adam sin, and how does Adam's sin affect the rest of mankind? In Genesis, Moses clearly states that man (humanity) was created by God without the sin nature, but with the ability to sin, and was placed in the Garden of Eden. It did not take long before man, enticed by his wife,

who had been enticed by the serpent, chose to not live in accordance with God's Word. Violating God's Word is sin, and Adam's sin plunged the entire universe into sin and entropy. This concept often referred to as the "Federal Headship of Adam" is a foreign concept to the modern mind. But in the paternalistic society of the Old Testament, it was readily understood that the father represents his family and descendants. The Apostle Paul speaks about this in his letter to the Romans:

*Romans 5:12-14 (ESV)*

*12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

Wayne Grudem in his Systematic Theology states:

*"But it was not true that all men had actually committed sinful actions at the time that Paul was writing, because some had not even been born yet, and many others had died in infancy before committing any conscious acts of sin. So Paul must be meaning that when Adam sinned, God considered true that all men sinned in Adam."<sup>41</sup>*

The Bible Knowledge Commentary puts it like this:

*The federal headship view considers Adam, the first man, as the representative of the human race that generated from him. As the representative of all humans, Adam's act of sin was considered by God to be the act of all people and his penalty of death was judicially made the penalty of everybody.<sup>42</sup>*

A.A. Hodge states:

*The federal headship of Adam presupposes and rests upon his natural headship. He was our natural head before he was our federal head. He was doubtless made our federal representative because he was our natural progenitor, and was so conditioned that his agency must affect our destinies, and because our very nature was on trial (typically if not essentially) in him. whatever, therefore, of virtue in this explanation the natural headship of Adam may be supposed to contain the federal theory retains.<sup>43</sup>*

What these quotes reveal to us is that Adam, as the first man and physical progenitor of the entire human race, represented the whole of the human race before God. His failure before God resulted in the failure of every other human, with the exception of the God/Man Jesus Christ. It

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<sup>41</sup> Grudem, Wayne; Systematic Theology, Zondervan publishing House. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Page 494.

<sup>42</sup> Roy B.; Dallas Theological Seminary Walvoord, John F.; Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> Hodge, A. A., Outlines of Theology, (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group), 1999

should be pointed out that in the account in Genesis chapter 3, Adam is credited with the sin that condemned the world, even though Eve took the fruit first, and Satan rebelled against God before either Adam or Eve. Adam alone stood in the position of being the head of the human race, and as a result, it was Adam's sin that affected the rest of history.

In the tribal world of the Old Testament, the concept of federal headship was very real and well known. The tribal chief spoke and acted for the tribe. Every tribe member was affected and effected by what the chief did. Thus the federal view of Adam as representative of all mankind made complete sense.

There is another view, most frequently referred to as the Augustinian View, named after Augustine and held by John Calvin, Martin Luther, and others. This view holds that in:

*Romans 5:15 (ESV)*

*15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man 's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.*

all men were a participant with Adam in sin. Holders of this view utilize:

*Hebrews 7:9-10 (ESV)*

*9 One might even say that Levi himself who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.*

To claim that just like Levi, who was not yet born when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, but because he would be born after Abraham as a descendant of Abraham, he participated with Abraham in paying the tithes. This view is often referred to as the "Seminal View."

It seems most logical to see the proper and correct view as a combination of the Federal view and the seminal view. Adam represented all of humanity before God and stood as the progenitor of the entire human race.

#### *Consequences of Depravity*

With Adam's sin resulting in the imputation of sin on the entire human race, the penalty of sin was also imposed. As soon as Adam sinned, everything changed.

*Genesis 3:7-8 (ESV)*

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

There was a dramatic new paradigm for Adam and Eve. They all of a sudden saw themselves as naked and sewed leaves together to make so clothes. I think about what they instinctually did in putting clothes on for the first time, is they put something between themselves and God. Not only did they separate themselves from God with clothes, but they also hid from God. They were demonstrating in their actions what sin really is, separation from God. God then pronounced judgment on Satan, Eve, and then Adam.

*Genesis 3:14–19 (ESV)*

*14 The LORD God said to the serpent,*

*“Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.*

*15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”*

*16 To the woman he said,*

*“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,  
but he shall rule over you.”*

*17 And to Adam he said,*

*“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;*

*in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;*

*18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;*

*and you shall eat the plants of the field.*

*19 By the sweat of your face*

*you shall eat bread,*

*till you return to the ground,*

*for out of it you were taken;*

*for you are dust,*

*and to dust you shall return.”*

As a result of sin, women would have greater pain in childbirth and will have struggles with the leadership of the husband. Since Eve overstepped her God-ordained role to follow her husband, the husband would have leadership over her. God told Adam that there would be painful work in growing food. God also tells Adam that he would physically die. He was already spiritually dead. Just as in his sin, Adam was the human head, he was also the human head in punishment. We all have been born to die; all actually have died with the exception of those few God has raptured out. Those church age saints alive at the time of Jesus' return will be raptured without seeing death. All other humans of all ages have or will experience death.

Another ramification of sin is the separation of all men from God, the true definition of sin. It is also clear from Genesis 3 that sin affects others. Satan's sin affected Eve, Eve's sin affected Adam and Adam's sin affected the entire human race.

*Sin is Also Permanent.*

*Hebrews 12:16-17 (ESV)*

*16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.*

Charles Ryrie states:

*sin, once committed, can never be undone. Forgiveness can be experienced and fellowship restored, but history cannot be changed or erased. Adam and Eve, once expelled, could not return to the Garden of Eden. Esau could not retrieve the birthright he sold (Heb. 12:16–17). Moses could not personally enter the Promised Land but could only see it from a distance because of his sin (Num. 20:12; Deut. 3:27). The kingdom was taken from Saul and his descendants*

*because he did not wait for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifices (1 Sam. 13: 13—14). These are sobering examples of the ramifications of sin.<sup>44</sup>*

Once committed, the sin is never erased from history.

*Jeremiah 31:34 (ESV)*

*34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD, ' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Here Jeremiah tells us that God forgets the sins of those He has forgiven. As the Omniscient sovereign God, He knows everything and cannot actually forget anything. So, we have to interpret God forgetting our sins as meaning that God chooses to not hold those sins against us; which in many ways seems bigger than forgetting. He knows but chooses to not hold it against us.

*James 4:4 (ESV)*

*4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an **enemy of God**.*

James uses the idea of friendship with the world to mean sin. A sinner is an enemy of God. Paul also tells us we were enemies of God.

*Romans 5:10 (ESV)*

*10 For if while we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

*Colossians 1:21 (ESV)*

*21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,*

God created Adam to fellowship with him. To have a relationship with, much like God had experienced within the Triune Godhead. But as soon as Adam sinned, the entirety of humanity became His enemy. Alienated from God because of sin. As an enemy of God no longer able to fellowship with God, requiring salvation to restore our relationship.

This brings us back to our section, Solus Christus. Christ alone.

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<sup>44</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Basic Theology. • A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 235.

## Salvation by Christ Alone

We have already seen in previous studies that salvation comes by faith alone through grace alone.

*Acts 4:11-12 (ESV)*

*For this **Jesus** is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 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.*

It is only through the work of Jesus Christ that God has the legal right to forgive our sins and provide for us eternal life. God's justice demands that God be just. He cannot operate contrary to His character. While He is also loving and forgiving, justice means He cannot just disregard our sins, which are actually violations of His character. But the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient sin. Jesus is God and was appropriate since Jesus is also a man.

*John 15:5 (ESV)*

*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.*

Jesus Himself reminded His Disciples that He alone provides them salvation.

As we have seen in previous studies, the Reformers teaching that salvation comes only through faith by God's grace through Christ alone was a challenge to the standard theological understanding of the time of the reformers. Sacramental theology was the primary theology of the Roman Catholic Church, which was the most visible church. Sacramental theology holds that in addition to the sacrifice of Jesus, man must do additional things.

Solus Christus, as taught by the reformers, not only sought to counter sacramentalism but also increasing false teaching in the Roman Church and in other groups concerning Jesus. There was a growing movement that questioned Jesus' divinity, His humanity, His sacrifice, as well as many other areas of orthodox Christology. The reformers sought to reinforce the teaching of who and what Jesus really is.

The reformers utilized Solus Christus to teach against a growing set of false teachings concerning the deity of Jesus and as a result, the reality of the Trinity. Movements such as Socinianism became popular during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Those following Socinianism taught that God did not have complete knowledge, Jesus was not God, and the Trinity could not possibly exist since Jesus was not God. Of course, that leads to the need to have something added to Jesus' sacrifice to gain salvation.

Today the true church must also champion **Christ Alone** to combat modern teachings within the church concerning Jesus uniqueness and exclusivity. Many today believe that at best, Jesus was a great leader, but it is not conceivable that His death 2000 years ago could save any, even today. The pluralism of today's religious environment demands that Jesus only be seen as a great leader, not Lord and savior.

It is incumbent on the church today to teach the truth of the Word of God that there is salvation in no other name than Jesus.

*Acts 4:12 (ESV)*

*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.*

*John 14:6 (ESV)*

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

To properly teach Solus Christus, the church must teach the complete revelation from God. The church must present the entirety of God's movement from creation to recreation. This necessitates a high view of Scripture and a hermeneutical system that interprets the text as God, the original author, intended us to interpret it.



## Soli Deo Gloria

For many theologians, Soli Deo Gloria seems to be different from the other four Solas of the Reformation. The other Solas all focus on two main theological points which were central to the Reformation, while Soli Deo Gloria is more of a general idea. Yet other theologians take the exact opposite position. John Hannah writing in honor of R.C. Sproul stated: "Soli Deo Gloria is the very heart and substance of the other four solas."<sup>45</sup>

## God's Glory

John Piper describes God's Glory at the Holiness of God put on display.<sup>46</sup> He further describes it as the infinite worth of God made manifest.<sup>47</sup> Holy means separated from the common. We see this throughout the Old Testament as God reinforces the separation of the clean and unclean. This means that the holiness of God is infinite separation from anything common. Because God is completely holy, He is glorious.

God's glory existed before creation and is an inherent part of who God is.

*John 17:5 (ESV)*

*5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the **glory that I had**  
**With you before the world existed.***

This makes God's glory intrinsic to God and not simply something ascribed to Him. But it is also something that we, as followers of Jesus, do, glorify God.

*1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)*

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

*Isaiah 43:6–7 (ESV)*

*6 I will say to the north, Give up,*

*and to the south, Do not withhold;*

*bring my sons from afar*

*and my daughters from the end of the earth,*

*7 everyone who is called by my name,*

*whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” (ESV)*

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<sup>45</sup> David VanDrunen. "Glory To God Alone: Another Look At A Reformation \*sola- "" Southern Baptist Journal of Theology 19, no. 4 (2015)

<sup>46</sup> "Soli Deo Gloria by John Piper," Ligonier Ministries, accessed June 1 8, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/soli-deo-gloria/>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

We do not give God glory. As we have seen, glory is intrinsic to His being. But we are to do things that reflect His glory and glorify Him, reveal His glory to others.

*" ... God's supreme end in planning, purchasing, and applying salvation is His own glory:*

*Psalm 106:8 (ESV)*

*Yet he saved them for his name 's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.*

*Isaiah 43:25 (ESV)*

*25 "I, lam he*

*who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

*Isaiah 48:11 (ESV)*

*11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned?*

*My glory I will not give to another.*

*Ezekiel 36:22 (ESV)*

*22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is notfor your sake, O house of Israel, that lam about to act, but for the sake ofmy holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.*

*Ephesians 1:6 (ESV)*

*6 to the praise ofhis glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

*Second, that therefore the chief end and intention of those who have received God's saving grace in Christ is to bring glory to Him (1 Cor. 10:31; Rev. 4:11)<sup>48</sup>*

What we see here is that His own glory is to be the end result of His plan of salvation. It cost God to save us. His own justice required sin to be dealt with, and His love provided a solution. But, when we remember that God created man in a world who was capable of sin, knowing he would sin, all the while already having a plan to deal with that sin, it becomes clear there was a purpose in it. That purpose is ultimately to be in a mutually accountable relationship, רָצוֹן

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<sup>48</sup> Alan Cairns, Dictionary of Theological Terms (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 425

(hesed), with His chosen. After the recreation of the New Heaven and New Earth, when God eliminates sin and death, even the potential of sin and death, His chosen spend eternity with Him, sharing in His glory. That is the complete understanding of Soli Deo Gloria. Glory alone to God.

## Soli Deo Gloria Reformation View

One of the early reformers, John Calvin, protested the Roman Catholic Church's position on idols, images, and statues seen in the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Gregory the Great, Pope in Rome from 590 to 604 AD, claimed that the images, which includes the paintings, statues, and other idols, are the books of the uneducated. Calvin said: By contrast, it is through the pure preaching of the Word that one comes to proper faith.<sup>49</sup>

Pope Gregory's concept of the idols being a way for the church to provide information to the uneducated masses, took root within the Roman church which resulted in many practices being centered around those images and idols. Many of the reformers recognized that these practices often resulted in the worship of the idols and images, rather than the worship of God. These practices required God to share His rightful glory with inanimate objects.

*Calvin's attack on idolatry was an effort to restore God's primary dignity among human beings. ... Calvin's attack on Roman Catholic "idolatry" is a condemnation of the improper mixing of spiritual and material in worship—an affirmation of the principle [that the finite cannot convey the infinite]. It is also an indictment of man's attempt to domesticate God and to rob him of his glory—and affirmation of the principle soli Deo gloria.<sup>50</sup>*

The fact that man worshiped the images made the images idolatrous, not the images themselves. By worshiping the images and idols, God was robbed of His rightful glory.

The sacramental system of the Roman Church contributed to the theft of God's glory. The Roman church taught that through the sacraments, physical actions completed by man contributed to the grace each man receives. This would, in effect, nullify the intention of God's salvation plan to bring Him glory. At best, the sacramental system would require God to share glory for salvation.

John Calvin wrote:

*“We never truly glory in (God) until we have utterly discarded our own glory. It must, therefore, be regarded as a universal proposition, that whoso glories in himself glories against God...Let us remember, therefore, that in the whole*

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<sup>49</sup> Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 54. <sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> <sup>50</sup> Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 54-55.

*discussion concerning justification the great thing to be attended to is, that God's glory be maintained entire and unimpaired...<sup>51</sup>*

Calvin articulates what most of the reformers understood. The Roman Church was not focused on God's glory, but often their own glory, contrary to what God taught. The Pope could grant an indulgence an infringement on God's prerogative. Calvin and the other reformers clearly saw what scripture teaches salvation is a work of God alone, and to Him, alone glory belongs. This led the reformers to risk their very lives to preach and teach the truth of God's Word.

It appears that most of the reformers saw Soli Deo Gloria as a central thread that bound the other Solas together. As we have seen, salvation is God's plan that ultimately concludes in His glory.

Salvation is at the central core Sola Gratis, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, and Solus Christus. In fact, Soli Deo Gloria is the central theme of all of God's revelation, both His Word and His creation.

## How we Share God's Glory

As followers of God, His glory is also something that we share with Him, or partake of.

*1 Peter 5:1 (ESV)*

*5 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:*

*Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)*

*29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

*John 17:22 (ESV)*

*22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,*

*Romans 5:2 (ESV)*

*2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Clearly, Scripture teaches that God's glory is something we, as followers of Jesus, will share together in. But what does that mean? How do we share in His glory?

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<sup>51</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), 3.13.2.

Adam was created by God out of the dust of the ground.

*Genesis 2:7 (ESV)*

*7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

*Genesis 1:31 (ESV)*

*31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

God made Adam out of dust on the sixth day of creation. When He was complete, God judged that His creation was very good. Meaning perfectly suitable for His purposes. What were God's purposes?

*Isaiah 43:6–7 (ESV)*

6 *I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
7 everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.” (ESV)*

Created by God for His glory. God created Adam, then He created Eve, placed them in the Garden of Eden, perfectly suited for the task for which He created them, to bring Him glory. But then Adam sinned, and as we have already seen in this study, that plunged all of humanity into sin. Yet's God's plan is not thwarted or altered. He created man for His glory. Man sinned, God's plan continued on with salvation, always being part of the plan.

*Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)*

*4 even as he chose us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love*

Since God chose us before creation, His plan to save us was part of His creation. So, we come to a question. Does the fact that God's plan of salvation predates creation mean that there will be more of God glory seen at the end of the plan that includes salvation than any plan that does not? I think Scripture demands the answer to this question is yes. Since God created man for His glory

and the end of the plan of salvation is His glory, we can only conclude we know about God, have seen more of God's attributes, all of which reveal His glory.

Theodicy is the sub-branch of theology that speaks of divine goodness despite the existence of sin and evil. A proper theodicy then would hold that God created man with the ability to sin, knowing that Adam would sin, so the ultimately more of God is known, and more of His glory revealed. Soli Deo Gloria is the answer to what an all powerful, all knowing, all loving God permits evil and sin in His world that at creation He viewed was just right for His purposes. It did not become defective with Adam's sin, creation continues to reflect God's Glory.

## Conclusion

As we have spent time examining the five solas of the Reformation, we have seen 5 central doctrinal core teachings from Scripture. They are not simply doctrines of the Reformation. They are central core elements of proper Biblical Doctrine. The reformers did not create these doctrines. They simply returned to a focus on these doctrines in their quest to reform the Roman Church. Martin Luther did not seek to build a new church, he tried to change the old church. But when the old church refused to return to proper Biblical Doctrine, the reformers were forced out. Some even executed by the church.

The five solas, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus, and Soli Deo Gloria, are doctrines that point back to the word and work of God. The five solas remove man's work from the equation and return the spotlight to God and His work alone. A well-educated follower of Jesus and student of His word should know these doctrines and how to defend them. Deviation from these central doctrines results in a distorted view of how we are saved, who saves us and for what purpose we are saved. Deviation from these doctrines requires a departure from Scripture itself and since Scripture is entirely and directly from God through the pen of forty or so men, deviation from scripture is a deviation from God Himself.

Many in the church today do not want to study theology of any kind. But this results in churches that do not know the truth revealed in God's Word, and they do not know when they are taught something in conflict with God's Word. It is my prayer that this study reinforces the understanding of all who read and participate in this study of who God is, why He saves us, and how we will share eternity with Him.

Like Johann Sebastian Bach, Georges Fredric Handel, and Christoph Graupner noted on the bottom of their musical compositions SDG, Soli Deo Gloria. May this study of the Five Solas of the Reformation be for His glory alone.

Soli Deo Gloria