

Protestants generally trace their separation from the Catholic Church to the 16th century. The protests against Rome began in earnest when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor at the university of Wittenberg, called in 1517 for a reopening of the debate on the sale of indulgences. Luther's dissent marked a sudden outbreak of a new and irresistible force of discontent which had been pushed underground but not resolved. The quick spread of discontent occurred to a large degree because of the printing press and the resulting swift movement of both ideas and documents, including the *95 Theses*.

The **Five *solas*** are five Latin phrases that emerged during the Protestant Reformation and summarize the Reformers' basic theological beliefs in contradistinction to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church of the day. The Latin word *sola* means "alone" or "only" in English.

The five *solas* articulated five fundamental beliefs of the Protestant Reformation, pillars which the Reformers believed to be essentials of the Christian life and practice.

All five implicitly rejected or countered the teachings of the then-dominant Catholic Church, which had in the reformers' mind usurped divine attributes or qualities for the Church and its hierarchy, especially its head, the pope.

In the morning service I preached on three of the five *solas*: GRACE ALONE, SCRIPTURE ALONE, and FAITH ALONE. Protestantism rejects the catholic belief that salvation comes through grace received in the sacraments; it restricted the church's role to one of proclaiming the unmerited gift of divine forgiveness.

When the Reformers used the words *sola Scriptura* they were expressing their concern for the Bible's authority, and what they meant is that the Bible alone is our ultimate authority—not the pope, not the church, not the traditions of the church or church councils, still less personal intimations or subjective feelings, but Scripture only.

The Reformers called justification by faith Christianity's "material principle," because it involves the very matter or substance of what a person must understand and believe to be saved. Justification is a declaration of God based on the

work of Christ. It flows from God's grace and it comes to the individual not by anything he or she might do but by 'faith alone' (*sola fide*). We may state the full doctrine as: Justification is the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

This evening I would like to continue with the theme, *Rediscovering the Gospel: Five Points of the Reformation*. The Reformers didn't discover something new. The gospel was always there in the Bible. The hearts of men had become darkened and ignorant to the truth of the gospel. Men such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin rediscovered the truth and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What they rediscovered could be summarized in five points. **Let us consider the fourth point, *sola Christus* or Christ alone.**

Dr. James Montgomery Boice writes, "The church of the Middle Ages spoke about Christ. A church that failed to do that could hardly claim to be Christian. But the medieval church had added many human achievements to Christ's work, so that it was no longer possible to say that salvation was entirely by Christ and his atonement. This was the most basic of

all heresies, as the Reformers rightly perceived. It was the work of God plus our own righteousness. The Reformation motto *solus Christus* was formed to repudiate this error. It affirmed that salvation has been accomplished once for all by the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification, and any ‘gospel’ that fails to acknowledge that or denies it is a false gospel that will save no one.”

The Apostle Paul declares in I Corinthians 16:22, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be **Anathema** Maranatha.”

Albert Barnes comments, “*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is a most solemn, close of the whole epistle. It was designed to direct them to the great and essential matter of religion, the love of the Lord Jesus. It is implied that there was danger, in their disputes and strifes about minor matters, of neglecting the love of the Lord Jesus, or of substituting attachment to a party in the place of that love to the Saviour, which alone could be connected with eternal life.

Let him be *Anathema*. The word properly means accursed, or devoted to destruction; and the idea here is, that he who did not believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him, would be, and ought to be, devoted to destruction, or accursed of God. It expresses what ought to be done; it expresses a truth in regard to God's dealings, not the desire of the apostle. No matter what any man's endowments might be; no matter what might be his wealth, his standing, or his talent; no matter if he were regarded as a ruler in the church, or at the head of a party; yet, if he had not true love to the Lord Jesus, he could not be saved.

Maran-atha. the Lord comes; “.i.e., will come.” The reason why this expression is added may be,

(1.) to give the greater solemnity to the declaration of the apostle; i. e., to give it an emphatic form.

(2.) To intimate that, though there were no earthly power to punish a want of love to the Saviour; though the state could not, and ought not to punish it; and though the church could not exclude all who did not love the Lord Jesus from its bosom, yet they could not escape. For the Lord would himself come to take vengeance on his enemies; and no one could escape. Though, therefore, those who did not love the

Lord Jesus could not be punished by men, yet they could not escape Divine condemnation. The Lord would come to execute vengeance himself, and they could not escape.”

Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ alone? Do you love the world and self more than Christ? Where do you stand with Christ tonight?

Jonathan Edwards writes, “That there is no remedy but in Jesus Christ; there is nothing else will give you true quietness. If you could fly into heaven, you would not find it there; if you should take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, in some solitary place in the wilderness, you could not fly from your burden. So that if you do not come to Christ, you must either continue still weary and burdened, or, which is worse, you must return to your old dead sleep, to a state of stupidity; and not only so, but you must be everlastingly wearied with God's wrath.”

During the Reformation and even today, Roman Catholic Dogma taught and still teaches in the **necessity** of Jesus Christ but not in the **sufficiency** of Christ. What Christ did on the Cross was not enough for sinners. The fact that Roman Catholic theology

believes in Purgatory itself reveals that Jesus Christ is insufficient to save. They are still trusting in something other than Christ to obtain everlasting life. Rome teaches, “Christ yes, but not Christ alone.” So Christ is not so much the Savior as He is the helper. Someone to help you save yourself.

A Christian author observes, “Since you affirm Purgatory you thereby affirm what Christ did was not sufficient to forgive ALL their sins, and that they must make some contribution where His work lacked. You say they are all saved. Then why aren't they immediately transported into God's presence? Because what Christ did was not enough. Therefore you reject the sufficiency of Christ. Saying you believe in His sufficiency and then denying it with your theology out of the same mouth. If Christ were sufficient you would need to add nothing. His work is complete. He sat down at the right hand of God and intercedes for sinners. His righteousness is enough to save sinners to the **UTTERMOST**.”

Particularly troubling was (and is) Catholicism's teachings concerning Mary. She is considered to be the “Co-Redemptrix” with Christ, that is, she cooperates with Christ in the work of saving sinners. While the Vatican II council (1963-65) brought

certain reforms, it changed nothing of Catholicism's underlying theology. In that council it was stated that Mary was "used by God not merely in a passive way, but as cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. . . . She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him in suffering as He died on the cross." [ii] In other words, while the Church does not teach that Mary literally died for our sins, it does teach that by giving birth to Christ, nurturing Him through life, and even suffering with Him on the cross, she indirectly contributed to the work of salvation. Putting it bluntly, Mary was elevated to goddess status, just as Semiramis was in Babylon, Ishtar in Assyria, Astarte in Phoenicia, Isis in the Egypt, Aphrodite in Greece, and Venus in ancient Rome.

Further still, Mary is also considered to be "Mediatrice," that is, she now dispenses God's grace and blessings to the spiritually needy. Again, Vatican II reaffirmed:

"This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross. This maternity will last

without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. For, taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy fatherland. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix.[iii]”

Not only was (and is) Mary central to the Roman system, but also of great value is the veneration of and prayers to the saints, something that again comes from paganism. There are almost as many saints and saints’ days as there are days in the year. There was a saint for virtually every business, age, calling, and vocation. Even nations had their patron saints. These saints, it is taught, have a surplus of good works that can benefit people on earth and can be prayed to and asked for aid in sickness and misfortune.

Solus Christus is the teaching that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other.

Absolution of sin reconciles the sinner with God directly through faith in Christ's forgiveness rather than with the Roman Catholic priest and the church as mediating entities between the sinner and God.

We read in Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

1 Timothy 2:5-6, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Christ alone was one of the five points of the Reformation.

2. The fifth and final point of the Reformation is *Soli Deo gloria*, To God Alone Be The Glory.

The doctrine states essentially that everything that is done is for God's glory to the exclusion of humankind's self-glorification and pride. Christians are to be motivated and inspired by God's glory and not their own.

Soli Deo gloria is the teaching that all glory is to be due to God alone, since salvation is accomplished solely through His will and action — not only the gift of the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus on the cross but also the gift of faith in that atonement, created in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. The reformers believed that human beings—even saints canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, the popes, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy—are not worthy of the glory that was accorded them. That is that one should not exalt such humans for their good works, but rather praise and give glory to God who is the author and sanctifier of these people and their good works.

Dr. Boice writes, “ Each of the great solas is summed up in the fifth Reformation motto: *soli Deo gloria*, meaning ‘to God alone be the glory.’ It is what the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 11:36 when he wrote, ‘to Him be the glory forever! Amen.’ These words follow naturally from the preceding words, “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (v. 36), since it is because all things really are from God, and to God, that we say, ‘to God alone be the glory.’”

We read in 1 Corinthians 1:31, “That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Romans 11:33-36, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

There never will be a time when the affairs of the universe shall not be conducted with reference to the glory of God.

That honor and glory shall shine brighter and brighter, and all worlds shall be perfectly adapted to show his praise, and to evince his greatness, goodness, power, and love, for ever and ever. Thus let it be, is the language of every one that truly loves him.

The church in Prince George is here for one purpose: to honor and glorify Jesus Christ. The Scripture declares, “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is also to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and joy are in His place. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name...”

In closing, the Protestant Reformation is our heritage that we should not be ashamed to embrace. Many of the religious freedoms and privileges we enjoy today flow to us from the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation can be summarized in five points: GRACE ALONE, SCRIPTURE ALONE, FAITH ALONE, CHRIST ALONE, and TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY. Let us continue to be faithful to the heritage we have so graciously received from the Protestant Reformation. Let us live up, by God’s grace, to the name of our church, *Heritage Free Presbyterian Church*. Let us pray!