

Today's Sermon

5 Solas and our Philosophy of Ministry (Ephesians 3:20-4:16)

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, April 23, 2013

Peppers update before we pray

2 weeks ago I preached the sunrise service here and 1 week ago I preached in the city of Rome. I wanted to start today thanking you for your prayers, and the church there really needs prayer.

I want to thank our elders for letting me take days away to encourage our missionary there and their new church plant. Cesare Albanesi and his family send their thanks and greetings to you. I also got to meet his fellow elders and co-workers at their Bible school associated with TMAI.

They estimate only a fraction of a percent in Italy preach the true gospel. Paul said in Romans 1 *'I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome...for it is the power of God...'* As I walked around Rome, I was reminded of the need for that gospel power of God to be preached

- I walked on steps Paul likely walked on as he was led to the Mamertime Prison (60s AD)
- Near there Peter would've seen the statue of Nero, 100 ft. tall, similar to Statue of Liberty
- Both apostles were executed there, other Christians in the Colosseum or Circus Maximus
- Today is a lot of dead Christianity in that city of Rome where Roman Catholicism arose
- There are huge statues of Mary that are prayed to and you see a little Jesus under her feet
- The attributes of God in Romans are attributed to Mary in a prayer, Jesus' name at end
- We saw the Vatican's wealth and works they think save, relics and religion that's empty
- We visited the Sancta Sanctorum, their holy of holies, where you get plenary indulgences
- It has the Scala Santa, or Holy Stairs from Jerusalem, that Catholics climb on their knees
- We went around the sides and from the top we saw sad faces trying to work up to heaven
- When Luther visited Rome in 1510/11, he climbed those steps on his knees, and some say it was his aha moment as he looked back and thought who can say if all this is true?¹
- Luther's son later wrote on these steps Luther recalled vividly *the just shall live by faith*²

It made me recall how important the reformation was then and now. The Roman church taught scripture *plus* tradition, grace *plus* good works, faith *plus* the saints, Christ *plus* His mother, and God's glory *plus* the Pope's primacy. But the Reformation gospel is the power of God in 5 solas

- Based on scripture alone (sola scriptura—our sole authority and sufficiency for godly life)
- It's by grace alone (sola gratia) thru faith alone (sola fide) in Christ alone (solo Christo)
- And that salvation is to the glory of God alone (soli deo gloria). Key word is sola / alone

If you were to go to our church website, click about->what we teach, you'll see this as the top.

1. The Five Solas of the Reformation - Overarching Guiding Principles

Sola **Scriptura** – Scripture alone is our ultimate authority and standard

Soli **Deo Gloria** - to God alone be all glory, none to us, in salvation and all of life

Sola **Gratia** – The gospel of salvation is by grace alone, all of God, nothing of man

Sola **Fide** - The gift of saving grace is received by faith alone, not our works or merit

Solo **Christo** - Christ alone is Savior and should be the ultimate focus of all we do

If you go to the [what we believe/essentials](#) page, you'll also see these 5 solas over each section. I've said before these are the banners we want to fly highest here. I'm as convinced as ever after my trip this is what the world needs, we need. With all that fresh in my mind I think it's good to have a refresher in these 5 solas of the reformed faith that are so essential here in America, too. These 5 core principles set apart true historic Christianity from the false, and from cults who affirm scripture (but not alone, other books). Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, liberal churches may say you're saved by grace through faith in Christ, but not alone (it's plus works).

Even protestant evangelicals can talk of God's glory, but not give all to Him alone for salvation.

Good churches can let other good things become the center instead of God's glory

We'll be back in Exodus after the conference but today we'll be in Ephesians. My title is [The 5 Solas and our Philosophy of Ministry](#). A ministry philosophy is a foundation for the why and how of ministry: Why and how are we to minister to and care for each other in the church? With our church care conference coming up in 5 days, to prepare for an important weekend, I thought it good to review why we're to do what we do and how: by His grace and for His glory alone.

Look with me at [Eph 2](#) and [v. 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.*

Point #1. We're saved to serve, by grace alone through faith alone (sola gratia, sola fide)

God doesn't save us to sit. God doesn't save us to slip out of church quietly and not do anything with the church or not talk to anyone from it during the week. We're not saved for the sidelines. We're not saved to be spectators. We're saved to be serving. [v. 9](#) says we're not saved by works but then [v. 10](#) says we're saved for good works. When He saves us, He re-creates us in Christ Jesus for good works that God has prepared for us to walk in, not to sit around and watch others

We're saved to serve, by grace through faith

[v. 10](#) says every believer is God's workmanship, His special creation to do good works He's prepared for each of us. What work are you doing in the church? How are you serving others? Grace doesn't just save us, it makes us alive. Look at [v. 1](#): *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— [dead made alive]...⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...**

Like Corey taught on Easter in [1 Peter](#), His mercy caused us to be born again (i.e., new life)

Even our faith is part of God's gift, it's not our gift to God. It's not our own doing of our own free will, it's not of ourselves, it's God's gift, not anything we do on our own, so none can boast

- if you're dead, you don't choose or do anything, the dead can only stink and stink worse
- dead in sin is spiritually dead, not moving to God or doing anything positive toward God

- but God when we were dead spiritually made us alive, that's what saved by grace means
- this is regenerating grace that precedes faith, God makes alive, then we respond in faith
- we're not resurrected because we respond, we respond in faith because we're resurrected
- but even that faith in v. 8 is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, it's all grace alone
- but saving faith doesn't stay alone, the saved will be with others doing good works, v. 10
- if you think you can be saved by being a good person or doing good things, you're not
- turn from your sin and trusting your works to trust the work of Jesus for you on the cross
- if you're saved, you're alive and saved to serve, by grace in gratitude and good works

We sang earlier: 'Through faith alone we come to You; We have no merit we can claim.

Sure that Your promises are true, We place our hope in Jesus' name ...

By grace alone we have been saved; All that we are has come from You.

Hearts that were once by sin enslaved, Now by Your pow'r have been made new.'

3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of **God's grace that was given to me for you...** [what does a steward or stewardess do on a plane? They serve others with what they've been given. Paul says God's grace was given to me for you]...

⁷ Of this gospel I was made **a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me** ... [so the gift of God's grace made him a minister, grace wasn't just given to him but was to flow through him serving others]

So point #1 is: We're saved to serve, by grace alone through faith alone (sola gratia, sola fide)

#2. Christ and His Word alone are sufficient for ministry (solus Christus, sola scriptura)

In ch 4 the all-sufficient Christ graciously gives believers all they need to minister in His body: **4:7** But grace was given to **each one** of us according to the measure of **Christ's gift**. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and **he gave gifts to men**..." ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip **the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ... ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by **every joint** with which it is equipped, when **each part** is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

9Marks: shepherds oversee ministry, deacons facilitate ministry, the body does ministry

Proposition: Christ gives every believer a role in ministering (serving/building up His body). His sufficient grace is given to each one according to the measure of Christ's gift. He gives the church shepherds and teachers, not to do all the ministry, v. 12 says to equip you to do ministry. Christ is enough for the saints/church to do ministry work (same word we're saved for in 2:10).

That word *ministry* in v. 12 is the NT word for service all believers are called to do

The 1st time my family visited this church, this was the passage I preached on as a candidate. I shared how my freshman year at Master's (a small Christian college), I was a basketball team "walk on" (1st 10 guys get full scholarship, guys like me got fun but no scholarship). I scored in warmups, I warmed the bench, 3rd string didn't play unless up by 30. I was a "practice player."

- I didn't care I wasn't a star on the court, I worked hard in practice to make starters better
- I cheered them on louder than any, and was the chief towel waver at the end of the bench
- I wasn't a passive spectator watching others do the real work, I had an active role to play

The next year I got cut from the team and was devastated. Only job available: assistant manager

- I took it to serve as the waterboy, washing their stinky uniforms, cleaning dirty lockers
- Different responsibilities during game: setup locker room beforehand, video (hard to sit in booth quietly off court), etc. *Being away from action was brutal but my role was vital*
- That taught me humility, every part is important, even what no one sees or what stinks
- If their uniforms weren't ready, if they didn't have water to hydrate, they couldn't play
- I learned I can help the team by doing what they need rather than what I would choose

In a sense Paul is saying in v. 11-12 there are those who founded the school, there's recruiters, athletic directors and coaches, but they equip the team to do the work, to get in the game. They don't do it for them, they prepare the team for the action and the teammates build each other up.

- The coach's pre-game speech isn't so you go home, it's so you go out and work as a team
- Nobody in the church is to be a spectator, or passive observer sitting back in the stands
- Some have more visible or upfront or center stage roles, others help by cheering them on
- Most are not the starting 5, many are behind-the-scenes, or helping from the sidelines
- Some go onto the court during timeouts to clean it up, some are running the scoreboard, some are in the support band, most are not the star, but every part has a valuable role

How ridiculous if the players stayed in the huddle and didn't break to go out, no '1-2-3 team'! But that's what Christians do when they prefer to stay in the holy huddle and don't go out there.

How ridiculous would it have been for us to send Coach Bill out on the court instead of us? To say 'well he's the paid guy, he knows the most, we're not professionals, and besides it's more comfortable here if we all sit on the side where we don't get sweaty or don't risk getting hurt.' As bad as that would for little Coach Bill to face the other team by himself instead of us, that's what Christians do when they don't get out there, sit on the sidelines, and expect pastors to do it

GCBC Philosophy of Ministry says on v. 11-12 'the body gathers...for teaching the believers and equipping and preparing them to scatter to do the work of ministry... so that they (the saints) are doing the work of ministry... ministering to one another... The NT word often translated "ministry" (diakonia) is a word that basically means service... all believers are servants or ministers in the primary sense of the Greek word. Any right-hearted work of service Christians give to each other is ministry, including prayer, changing diapers in the nursery, taking care of the facilities, running the sound board, working behind the scenes, etc. It is not... helpful to see the pastor as "the minister" when every Christian is a minister/servant biblically in a fundamental sense.'

This root verb in v. 12 is often used for women ministering to/with Jesus in the gospels
4:15 *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...*

That takes us to Christ and His Word. We're to speak the truth of His sufficient Word in love.

- And here Christ's truth spoken in love is sufficient to grow us to all do our part in v. 16
- 1:13 calls it *the Word of truth* that saves us, so scripture is SUFFICIENT TO SAVE
- 5:26-27 says Christ by His word sanctifies His church – SUFFICIENT TO SANCTIFY
- 6:17 says Christ's Word is the sole and sufficient weapon to fight against sin and Satan
- All else is defensive armor in ch 6, the sword of scripture is the only offensive weapon

You'll hear in the conference how scripture is sufficient to care for souls

GCBC Philosophy of Ministry: ‘The Word of God in the original is inspired, infallible, inerrant, sufficient, and authoritative for all of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 19:7-12...) There is no need to turn to secular men to solve man's spiritual problems (2 Peter 1:3), it is God's whole counsel in scripture rightly understood which has the power over sin (Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16) rather than the counsel of the ungodly which we should avoid (Psalm 1:1). We believe a truly biblical counseling model seeks to meet man's spiritual needs by God's all-sufficient Word, rather than integrating psychology or psychiatry to solve man's sin problems.

Any aspect of ministry must subordinate itself to the scrutiny of Scripture (Acts 17:11 ...) and be refined or even replaced where biblical truth warrants. The validity of any ministry philosophy is not pragmatic success, but faithfulness to the Word. Having a high view of God and His Word is the greatest need of the church, and a church or individual will be spiritually strong or weak in proportion to this ... Ministry begins with those who "tremble at God's Word" (Isa. 66:2), who reverence it, cherish it, submit to it, interpret it carefully and prayerfully, accurately handle it, apply it, protect it, and pass on its truth to others.’

May God help us to honor Christ and His sufficient word in our ministry

But there's 1 more question. A ministry philosophy is why we serve. What's our purpose?

Ministering is what believers do, the motive is why we do it. Why does God save us to serve? Look back at 1:4: *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,** ⁶ **to the praise of his glorious grace** ... [that's the purpose of election grace, to praise and prize the Father's glory. v. 7 talks about redemption, forgiveness, but for what purpose?] 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.** [the purpose is the glory the Son] ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. [glory of the Spirit]*

#3. Soli Deo Gloria (glory to God alone) is the purpose in ministering, and everything

It's not ultimately about us or what we do. It's about something *God did* in eternity past, it's about the grace of God working in the present, it's about a sovereign God who secures an eternal future for His elect. God's glory is the purpose above all, God's glory is to be praised and prized above all, not just perceived; God's glory is to be pre-eminent above all in all things

Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever

And all God's ministers say Amen. Then God's Word says therefore in ch 4, including ministry in v. 12 and every part of the body doing its part in v. 16. All to God be the glory in the church. This is the chief end of man and the church, to glorify God alone, soli deo gloria for all we do.

So as we come to the care conference this week, and it's not too late to register to come, I hope you do. But I hope we all remember the purpose of caring or ministering and everything is SDG

1 Peter 4:9 *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰ *As each one has received a gift, **minister it to one another** ... If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. (NKJV)*

IF TIME TELL THE STORY OF THE BRICKLAYERS, ONE INDIFFERENT, ANOTHER COMPLAINING

a 3rd bricklayer was working hard quickly and confidently. The same passerby simply stood and watched as he worked. After a few minutes, the bricklayer turned and said "hi, how are you doing." The guy replied "sorry to interrupt your work." The worker smiled, "no interruption, people are what my work's all about. "what are you doing?" The worker smiled "I'm building a great Cathedral to God's glory, for worshippers and the lost."

What made the difference? Their sense of purpose. The first two bricklayers didn't see much greater purpose in their work. Instead, they were singularly focused on their task because it was their job. The last bricklayer, however, connected his work with a greater purpose and mission in the daily mundane, SDG in the church.

GCBC Purpose Statement: This church exists by the grace of God for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all we do. This church shall seek to glorify God by the worship of God, teaching, discipleship, evangelism, edification, equipping the body to do ministry, etc.

Our Philosophy adds: "the goal of the church is that every [one would be] built up through life-on-life iron-sharpening relationships. This is a responsibility "we" all share; Paul does not say this is what only one does as a preacher or pastor. It is a church effort... [with] close association involving mutual involvement and relationships, sharing, joint participation, communication..."

Our prayer is that in Gold Country Baptist Church, a passion for the Supremacy of God and Sufficiency of His Word would be shared within our numbers, would spread to our community and to the nations through us, and that we might further magnify King Jesus, to the praise of the glory of God's grace. It is our hope that God will use us in whatever means He deems best in His purposes to bring honor to Him and to build up His people for His glory. We hope and pray we will together always seek by God's grace to work towards a biblical ministry that is Scripture-saturated, Spirit-sensitive, Christ-compelled, God-centered, and that from Him and through Him and to Him would be all things, to God be the Glory (Rom. 11:36).

¹ R.C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 56.

² Henry Ganss, "Martin Luther," ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press; The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1907–1913).