

INTRODUCTION: This morning we're taking a brief break from our expositional study of Luke to celebrate the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. That reformation began in earnest on October 30, 1517, when an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses (topics for debate) to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. The wrong-headed orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church taught that a Christian could be saved from the guilt and penalty of his sins by purchasing indulgences from the Catholic Church. Johannes Tetzel came through Luther's Germany selling these little slips of paper as a fundraiser to bankroll the construction of the new St. Peter's Basilica. He even had a catchy little slogan: "The moment the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." It was the sale of these indulgences, and the pope's presumption that he himself had authority to sell forgiveness of sins, that prompted Luther's protest in the 95 Theses.

But the sale of indulgences was just one of many symptoms that the Church had strayed from simple and pure devotion to Jesus Christ. This morning we are going to revisit the five major principles of the Protestant Reformation. They're all in Latin, and they begin with the word *Sola*, which means "alone." They're referred to as the *Solas* of the Reformation. *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone; *Sola Gratia* – Grace alone; *Sola fide* – faith alone; *Solus Christus* – Christ alone; and *Soli Deo Gloria* – to God's glory alone. In each case, it was the *Sola*, the word "alone," that made all the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant. The Roman Catholic Church never denied the truth and necessity of Scripture. It simply added church tradition as an equal source of authority alongside Scripture. The Catholic Church didn't deny that man was saved by grace; it simply added that men still had inherent potential to choose God. The Catholic Church didn't deny that we are justified by faith; they simply added good works to faith in Jesus as an additional ground of our justification. The Catholic Church didn't deny Jesus' divinity or sacrifice; it simply added to Christ the need for human priests and the need for the Mass as a re-sacrificing of Christ. As a result, while the Catholic Church didn't deny that God deserved glory for our salvation, the implication seen rightly by the Reformers was that the Church was only giving God half His glory by refusing to add the word "alone" to each of these five aspects of salvation. The "*sola*" was the difference between being Catholic and being Protestant, and it remains the difference still today.

Modern Evangelicalism has claimed to be the rightful heir to the Protestant Reformation. Yet it seems that evangelicals today are forgetting the importance of the *solas* just as badly as the Catholic Church had done in Luther's day, and still does today. "The present-day orthodoxies of relativism, pluralism, and secularism" are pressing in hard on the church (Johnson, *Case*, 48), so hard in fact that Terry Johnson says "The contemporary audience is reluctant to think theologically. It wants experience. It wants sensations. But it typically does not want to think, or think hard, or think in theological categories. We are beginning to pay a price for our neglect" (Johnson, *Case*, 48, 78). So let's remind ourselves of the five Principles of Protestantism.

1. SOLA SCRIPTURA¹

The Situation. Official Roman Catholic doctrine insisted that church tradition stands with Scripture as an equal source of authority for doctrine and practice, and that the Pope had authority to decide matters of doctrine and practice himself. The question was: Is Scripture alone the final authority for Christian faith and practice? Or does Scripture share its authority with the church and its interpretive tradition? Does the church stand beside Scripture, as a parallel authority, or beneath Scripture, in submission to it? Scholars call *Sola Scriptura* the formal principle of the Reformation. By teaching that Scripture alone is authoritative, the Reformers were teaching that Scripture alone had authority to determine the rules of engagement. Terry Johnson puts it like this:

"The formal dimension of an argument has to do with its 'form', that is, with the rules of debate, the sources from which arguments can be drawn, the authorities that are to be regarded as legitimate. The Protestants argued that Scripture alone was the final authority in the debate. The Roman Catholic church argued that the church, its hierarchy, its tradition, and its normative interpretation of Scripture were sources that could be cited as equally legitimate. Agreement was never reached on the formal issue" (T. Johnson, *Case*, 75-76).

Scripture. But where were the Protestant Reformers getting this stuff? They were getting it from Scripture itself. **2Tim 3:16-17** "All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for

correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2Tim 3:15-17; cf. 2Pet 1:21). If all Scripture is breathed out by God, then Scripture speaks with the authority of God Himself. Scripture claims for itself an ultimate authority. It stands alone, above all other sources of authority. Inspiration produces inerrancy, and inerrancy produces authority. The inspiration of Scripture – the fact that it is breathed out, expired by God, means that it is inerrant – without error in all it affirms. And because it is both breathed out by God Himself and without error, it speaks with exclusive, supreme authority. What this implies, then, is that the church’s authority stands under Scripture, not beside it.

But 2Tim 3:17 teaches even more than the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture. It teaches the sufficiency of Scripture as well. “*All Scripture is...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*” Scripture makes the man of God competent, equipped for every good work. Scripture is enough for our evangelism. It is enough for our growth in holiness. It is enough for our guidance in matters of daily decision-making (Boice).

Bible-Only-ism. But we need to clarify what *Sola Scriptura* is NOT. Some Christians, especially in America during the 1800’s, began to use *Sola Scriptura* to reject the validity of any doctrinal creed or confession of faith formulated by man. The slogan of these Christians became “No Creed but the Bible.” Yet according to WGT Shedd, who taught at Union Seminary in NYC in the late 19th century, “this kind of appeal to Scripture is only an appeal to Scripture as the reviser understands it. Creeds, like commentaries, are Scripture studied and explained” (Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, 148-149). *Sola Scriptura* does not mean Bible-only-ism, as if churches are always wrong to summarize Bible doctrine using confessions of faith like the one we recited earlier. Rather, ***Sola Scriptura* means that Scripture is the standard of all standards, the norm of all norms.** The Reformers were not rejecting historic creeds and councils. They were simply submitting them to Scripture.

Interpretive Autonomy, or Me-and-my-Bible-ism. We should also clarify that *Sola Scriptura* is not the idea that any person can lock himself alone in a room with just himself and his Bible and arrive at Truth with a capital T. The error here is what Keith Mathison calls “the exaltation of the individual conscience over the collective conscience of the church” (Mathison in Sproul Jr, *After Darkness*, 38-40). Mathison says that many Protestants today have rejected *sola Scriptura* and embraced instead the total freedom of the Christian’s individual conscience to make of the Bible whatever makes sense to him. This is part of what Nathan Hatch refers to as *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Alexander Campbell in the 1800’s said “I have endeavored to read the Scriptures as though no one had read them before me” (Hatch, 179). This is why the church historian John W. Nevin complained that Christians were treating the Bible like “a book dropped from the skies for all sorts of men to use in their own way” (Hatch, 182). Yet John Calvin guarded against just that misunderstanding 300 years prior. “I acknowledge that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom; but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign” (Hatch, 180, see n.62 for source). *Sola Scriptura*, then, is not an excuse to throw church history and tradition overboard. It is a safeguard against Traditionalism, which is the wrong rule of the Church or the individual’s reason over Scripture. Mathison strikes the right note when he says that “Scripture is truth, and the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. There is, therefore, a necessary relationship between the Spirit-inspired Word of God and the Spirit-indwelt people of God” (Mathison in Sproul, *After Darkness*, 48). But the relationship is that the church is the student, preacher, and preserver of Biblical Truth, not its judge and jury.

Biblicism. Terry Johnson also warns us that “Believers must not fall into an unwarranted biblicism which, in the name of biblical authority, narrows the scope of its application to only that which the Bible explicitly states and not to that which it implies as well” (Johnson, Case, 43, Mt 22:31-33 God of Abraham = resurrection).

But, having made all those qualifications, the Protestant church has to affirm *Sola Scriptura* still today, even though the Catholic church still denies it. The Bible alone is the standard of all standards, the norm that judges even our best creeds and confessions. The Bible alone is the final authority for Christian faith and practice. Only

the Bible is breathed-out by God, and as such is uniquely inerrant, and therefore the supreme authority over the church. Scripture speaks the church into existence and revives its very life and energy because Scripture is the very word of God, which performs its work in us who believe. The Bible alone is sufficient as our power for evangelism, for growth in holiness, for guidance in the Christian life, and for salvation itself. **Psalm 107:19-20** “*They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.*” No wonder Martin Luther said that “there is no more terrible disaster with which the wrath of God can afflict men than a famine of the hearing of His word (Amos 8:11; Freedom, in Birkett, *Essence*, 110). This is why we are so committed to doctrinal, expository, consecutive preaching through books of the Bible, because we believe in this principle that the Bible alone is our supreme authority for faith and practice; and that God’s word creates the church, not vice-versa.

2. SOLA GRATIA

Situation. The Reformers used the principle of grace alone to clarify how people come to believe in Jesus Christ in the first place. Do we all have an equal ability to come to faith on our own power, or is the ability to believe itself a gift of God’s grace? How much freedom does the will of man have? What do we contribute, if anything, in turning to God? Are we converted solely by God’s grace and power, or are we converted by a combination of God’s grace and the cooperation of our own inherent spiritual energies? Did the fall of man leave us in perfect equipoise between good and evil so that we stand able to choose either with equal ease? Or do we need God’s grace to provide for every part of our salvation, including our ability to respond to it?

Scripture. The Reformers realized that salvation has to be by God’s grace alone, from beginning to end, because Scripture teaches that our minds are naturally darkened with both spiritual evil and spiritual ignorance. **Gen 6:5** “*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” And so we don’t have the ability to understand spiritual truth accurately. In **Dt 29:3-4** even though Israel had seen with their own eyes all God’s miracles in the 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea, “*But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.*” The same was true when people saw Jesus and His miracles with their own eyes, **John 1:4-5** “*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it.* Yet what accounts for our unbelief is not just our ignorance but our outright hostility toward the things of God. Paul says in **Rom 8:7-8** “*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. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*” So God must give us new minds so that we can understand in spiritual things, just as Paul says in **1Cor 2:14** “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*” Listen to Calvin talk about Scripture’s effect on unregenerate minds.

“They are like a traveler passing through a field at night who in a momentary lightning flash sees far and wide, but the sight vanishes so swiftly that he is plunged again into the darkness of the night before he can take even a step – let alone be directed on his way by its help... Human reason, therefore, neither approaches, nor strives toward, nor even takes a straight aim at this truth” (*Inst.*, 1:277-278).

What all this implies is that we cannot choose Christ of our own volition, because we don’t want Him in our own volition. God must sovereignly put us in Christ, which is the teaching of **1Cor 1:30** “*For by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*” And the text of all texts for human inability, and therefore our need for God’s grace alone to perform our salvation, is **Eph 2:1-3** “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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 – 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. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,*

even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together in Christ..." John 3:27; 15:5; Everything that does not come from faith is sin." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Ezek 36:26-27; 37; John 6:44).

These are the biblical text that drove Calvin to say of the human will "it is guilty because it is free, and enslaved because it is guilty, and as a consequence, enslaved because it is free" (Inst, 1:296). In light of our ignorance and inability, even our initial spiritual understanding and faith in Christ have to be gifts of God's grace. **Eph 2:8-9** "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand, that we should walk in them." John Calvin says, "He means by these words that all parts of good works from their first impulse belong to God." **Phil 1:6** "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it." Again Calvin says "there is no doubt that through 'the beginning of a good work' he denotes the very origin of conversion itself, which is in the will..." (Inst, 1:297). In **Phil 1:29** Paul says that faith itself is a gift "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." And according to **Phil 2:13**, we only "work out our salvation with fear and trembling because it is God who works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure." (Titus 3:4).

Phil 2:13 was huge for Calvin. Listen to him explain it. "It is the Lord's doing that the will conceives the love of what is right, is...inclined toward it, is aroused...to pursue it. Then it is the Lord's doing that the ...zeal and effort do not falter, but proceed...to accomplishment; lastly, [it is the Lord's doing] that man goes forward in these things with constancy, and perseveres to the very end" (Inst, 1:303). Calvin quotes Augustine, "Grace anticipates unwilling man that he may will; grace follows him willing that he may not will in vain" (Inst, 1:307). "Not only is grace offered by the Lord, which by anyone's free choice may be accepted or rejected; but it is this very grace which forms both choice and will in the heart, so that whatever good works then follow are the fruit and effect of that grace; and [that grace] has no other will obeying it except the will that it has made" (Inst, 1:308). "To will is of man; to will ill, of a corrupt nature; to will well, of grace" (Inst., 1:295). And so Calvin concludes that "the human will does not obtain grace by freedom, but obtains freedom by grace" (Inst, 1:308) ...But if that's true, then it cannot be our works that make us good. Rather, it is God who makes us good, and then we, as people made good by God's grace, do good works as a result. Here's how Martin Luther illustrates it in his Treatise on the Freedom of a Christian.ⁱⁱ

"Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works. 'A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit (Matt 7:18). It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree and that the tree does not grow on the fruits.... As it is necessary, therefore, that the trees exist before their fruits and the fruits do not make trees either good or bad, but rather as the trees are, so are the fruits they bear; so a man must first be good or wicked before he does a good or wicked work, and his works do not make him good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked." (Birkett, 128-129).

On John 15:5 "Apart from me you can do nothing," Calvin says this: "He does not say that we are too weak to be sufficient unto ourselves, but in reducing us to nothing he excludes all estimation of even the slightest little ability" (Inst, 1:302). [If all is of grace, then we should be a prayerful congregation]

3. SOLA FIDE

Situation. The principle of faith alone responded to the Catholic notion that our justification before God was not just based on faith in Jesus, but on our own good works as well. The question was, What must I do to be saved? The Catholic Church answered that we are justified by believing in Jesus Christ and by doing good works. The reformers answered with **John 6:29** "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." In **Acts 16:30**, When Paul had finished preaching the gospel to the Philippian Jailer, he asks Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, 'believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...' Theologians refer to *Sola Fide* as the **material principle** of the reformation. As *Sola Scriptura* was the formal principle by defining the terms of engagement, *Sola Fide* was the material, the matter, the stuff of their dispute.

The million-dollar question was whether we are justified by faith plus our works, or by faith alone, apart from works. And so “Calvin described the doctrine of justification by faith alone as ‘the principle hinge on which religion turns,’ and Luther described it as the ‘the article by which the church stands or falls (Johnson, 76).

The **Scriptures** that drove the reformers were the pivotal texts of the New Testament. **Romans 3:21-24** “*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation in His blood, to be received by faith.*” So this righteousness is displayed apart from law, and it comes through faith in Jesus. Sinners are justified as a gift, and this gift of propitiation is received by faith.

Rom 4:2-5. “*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.*” The Reformers understood that Paul was contrasting two opposing ways of being declared righteous by God – one by works, the other by faith in Jesus. If Abraham was declared righteous by his works, he had something to boast about. But he wasn’t. He believed God, and his faith was counted as righteousness. And the clincher is that God does not justify the godly in v.5. God justifies the ungodly. “*To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*” even though he has no righteousness works of his own, because he’s ungodly. **Gal 2:16.** *We know that a person is not justified by works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of law, because by works of law no one will be justified.* I mean, all you have to do is read it. It’s self-explanatory. A person is not justified by works of law, but by faith in Jesus, because works of law don’t justify anyone. (cf. Gal 3:10-13). **Phil 3:8-9.** “*I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith....*”

What the reformers took from all these texts on justification was that there was an aspect of subtraction and an aspect of addition in the matter of justification (Johnson, 87). Forgiveness is the subtraction side, where our sins were subtracted from our account. Imputation is the addition side, where Christ’s righteousness is credited to our account. And all of this, both for the Reformers and for us, is summed up in **2Cor 5:21** “*For our sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*”. And again, all of this was received by the instrument of faith, which by definition looks away from itself by trusting another. Martin Luther said, “Faith believes that the righteousness of Christ is its own and that its sin is not its own, but Christ’s, and that all its sin is swallowed up by the righteousness of Christ (Birkett, 124).

“Faith unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom...Everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride’s and bestow upon her the things that are his....By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all” (Luther, *Freedom*, in Birkett, *Essence*, 118).

And so Luther says “What man is there whose heart, upon hearing these things, will not rejoice to its depth, and when receiving such comfort will not grow tender so that he will love Christ as he never could by means of any laws or works?” (Birkett, 124). So that is the object of faith. That is what faith believes. But what is faith itself? **Cognitio, Assensus, and Fiducia (Johnson, 94).** For the reformers, saving faith had 3 elements – knowledge, assent, and trust. We have to first know the content of the gospel message. We have to know that God is holy

and we are sinful. We rebelled against God's law and love, which drew out God's righteous anger at us for our sin, and deserves spiritual death, eternity in hell. But God sent His only Son Jesus to live the sinless life we should have lived and to die the death we should have died. God's anger was satisfied, propitiated, in the death of Christ. Jesus died in our place, for our sins, and was raised again not only to vindicate his own righteousness but also so that he might share that vindication with all those who would ever repent of their sins and believe in Him. That's what we have to know. Faith, then, is not a faculty of ignorance, but of knowledge. But it's not enough for us to know these facts. We have to assent to them, agree with them. But the Bible says even the demons have these first two elements of faith. James 2:19 "*Even the demons believe – and shudder.*" Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury under King Henry the Eighth during the 1530's, said...

"The devils believe all things that are written in the New and Old Testaments to be true. Yet despite all this faith they are still devils, remaining in their damnable state, lacking the true Christian faith... There is one faith which in Scripture is called a dead faith, which brings forth no good works, but is idle, barren, and unfruitful... This faith is a persuasion and belief in a man's heart, which means that he knows that there is a God, and assents to all truth of God's most holy word, contained in holy Scripture, but it consists only in believing that the word of God is true. This is not properly called faith." (Birkett, 259, 263).

What is needed for biblical, saving faith is a third element, personal trust, what the Reformers called *fiducia*. It is not just generic trust in God, but specifically in Jesus Christ. And it is the trust that turns away from confidence in self and its works, throwing itself wholly on the merits of Jesus' blood and righteousness for right standing with God. And when knowledge of the gospel and assent to the gospel produce personal trust in Jesus, then righteous works will be the result. Listen again to Cranmer:

"The soul which has a living faith in it will always be doing some good work, which declares that it is living. It will not be unoccupied... It is moved to keep God's favor, to fear his displeasure, to continue [as] his obedient children, showing thankfulness by observing his commandments. It does it freely, primarily out of true love and not for dread of punishment or love of temporal reward, knowing how much, without deserving it, we have received his mercy and pardon freely." (265, 266).

4. SOLUS CHRISTUS

Situation. The rally cry of "Christ Alone" was in response to the sacerdotalism of the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church believed that it doled out salvation by doling out the sacraments through its priestly ministry. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper actually conferred real saving grace in its subjects by the mere working of the work. The phrase "Christ Alone" was especially in response to Catholic understanding of the Mass as a re-sacrificing of Jesus Christ. Still today, Vatican 2 reaffirms that "the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory, both for the living and the dead," and even that the Lord is 'appeased by the oblation thereof' (Session 22, chapter 2, cited in Johnson, *Case*, 67; See Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:179). So in short, the motto "Christ Alone" was shorthand for Christ as the only sacrifice for mankind, Christ as the only mediator between God and man, and Christ as the only head of the church (Johnson, *Case*).

Scripture. And yet again, the Reformers got these ideas from Scripture itself. Jesus said in **John 14:6** "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*" Peter said in **Acts 4:12** "*There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" Paul said in **2Cor 1:20** "*all God's promises find their 'yes' in Christ,*" and in **2Tim 2:5** "*There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*" **Hebrews 9:26** "*Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*" **Heb 9:14** "*By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*" When Christ said from the cross in John 19:30 "*It is finished,*" the Reformers took Him at His word.

In their own words. But this was not just dry, dusty doctrine. This was not just some academic debate for ivory-tower intellectuals. For the Reformers, this was an intensely personal and pastoral matter. Listen to how

Martin Luther speaks of Jesus Christ. “Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by Him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, ‘If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his” (Luther, in Birkett, *Essence*, 118).

5. SOLI DEO GLORIA

Situation. The Protestant Reformers believed that all the accretions that the Catholic church had added to theology and worship obscured God’s glory. In particular, they believed that the visually-based worship of the Catholic Church, with its images and sensory stimulants, violated the second commandment. They were attempts at worshipping the true God through visible images that can only reduce the infinite to the finite, which is to undermine God’s glory as God. So one of the applications of *Soli Deo Gloria* was to simplify the external trappings of corporate worship so that the visual element was minimized and the word element was maximized.

But *Soli Deo Gloria* wasn’t just the rally cry for reforming corporate worship. It was the reason for all the other *Solas*, and the goal to which they were pointing. The Church had compromised and undermined the glory of Scripture by placing the church’s authority beside it rather than under it. The Church had underestimated the glory of God’s grace by placing human ability alongside it. The Church had dishonored the glory of Christ’s person by placing human merit alongside faith in Him rather than behind faith in Him. The Church had obscured the glory of Christ’s priestly ministry by adding the necessity of human priests as intermediaries. The Church had dishonored the glory of Christ’s office as king by instituting the authority of the Pope. And the Church had dishonored the glory and sufficiency of Christ’s death and resurrection by considering the Mass a re-sacrificing of Christ. All of this is to say that that every other *Sola* of the reformation is designed to recover the last *Sola*, *Soli Deo Gloria*, to God alone be the glory. The Reformation was the application of Isa 42:7 “*I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.*” The Reformers preached Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone, because each of these preserved all the glory for God alone. This was, and still ought to be, the summarizing, guiding, driving principle of all Protestantism.

Scripture. And there were specific Scriptures that drove the Reformers to think this way. **Rom 11:36** says “*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.*” Three times in Ephesians 1, Paul says that the purpose of our adoption and salvation is so that we will be “to the praise of His glory.” God refers to believers in **Isa 42:7** as those “*whom I created for my glory.*” And in Ezekiel’s prophecy of the new covenant, God says in **Ezek 36:22-23** “*It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned...And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.*” And God says even to His enemy Pharaoh in **Exodus 9:16** “*For this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.*”

CONCLUSION

The *solas* still matter today. *Sola Scriptura* still matters because the authority and sufficiency of Scripture for church ministry are being challenged. *Sola Gratia* still matters for our understanding of the depth of human sinfulness and our inability to respond to the gospel apart from the gift of faith. *Sola fide* is at stake again in theological debates over justification and is always crucial for our own individual consciences as we wrestle with our sin. *Solus Christus* is being called into question by today’s universalism and the false idea that people can be saved apart from person and explicit faith in Jesus name. And *Soli Deo Gloria* is at stake not only in the church’s corporate worship but in all these issues. God still will not share His glory; nor should He....

i “When you encounter a present-day view of Holy Scripture, you encounter more than a view of Scripture. What you meet is a total view of God and the world, that is, a total theology, which is both an ontology, declaring what there is, and an epistemology, stating how we know what there is. This is necessarily so, for a theology is a seamless robe, a circle within which everything links up with everything else through its common grounding in God. Every view of Scripture, in particular, proves on analysis to be bound up with an overall view of God and man.” J. I. Packer, in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, 1978), page 61.

ii “A bishop, when he consecrates a church...or performs some other duty belonging to his office, is not made a bishop by these works. Indeed, if he had not first been made a bishop, none of these works would be valid....So the Christian who is consecrated by his faith does good works, but the works do not make him holier or more Christian, for that is the work of faith alone. And if a man were not first a believer and a Christian, all his works would amount to nothing...”