

## Solas # 1-2

**Introduction:** We want to commemorate the Reformation which is generally recognized as beginning in October of 1517. Though this is not a hard and fast date, it is certainly worth addressing.

### 1) Scripture Alone

- a) The definition: *Sola scriptura* emphasizes the Bible alone as the source of authority for Christians. By saying, “Scripture alone,” the Reformers rejected both the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Pope and confidence in sacred tradition. Only the Bible was “inspired by God” (2 Peter 1:20-21) and “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Anything taught by the Pope or in tradition that contradicted the Bible was to be rejected. *Sola scriptura* also fueled the translation of the Bible into German, French, English, and other languages, and prompted Bible teaching in the common languages of the day, rather than in Latin. (GotQuestions.org)
- b) The danger: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) Scripture alone is the inerrant rule of the church’s life, but the evangelical church today has separated Scripture from its authoritative function. In practice, the church is guided, far too often, by the culture. Therapeutic technique, marketing strategies, and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about what the church wants, how it functions and what it offers, than does the Word of God. Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship, including the doctrinal content of the music. As biblical authority has been abandoned in practice, as its truths have faded from Christian consciousness, and as its doctrines have lost their saliency, the church has been increasingly emptied of its integrity, moral authority and direction.
  - ii) Rather than adapting Christian faith to satisfy the felt needs of consumers, we must proclaim the law as the only measure of true righteousness and the gospel as the only announcement of saving truth. Biblical truth is indispensable to the church's understanding, nurture and discipline.
  - iii) Scripture must take us beyond our perceived needs to our real needs and liberate us from seeing ourselves through the seductive images, clichés, promises and priorities of mass culture. It is only in the light of God’s truth that we understand ourselves aright and see God’s provision for our need. The Bible, therefore, must be taught and preached in the church. Sermons must be expositions of the Bible and its teachings, not expressions of the preacher's opinions or the ideas of the age. We must settle for nothing less than what God has given.
  - iv) The work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience cannot be disengaged from Scripture. The Spirit does not speak in ways that are independent of Scripture. Apart from Scripture we would never have known of God's

grace in Christ. The biblical Word, rather than spiritual experience, is the test of truth.

- c) A statement: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.
  - ii) We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.
- d) The main Scripture: 2 Tim. 3:16-17
  - i) Two statements about the Scriptures—*All* (each and every) *Scripture is ...*
    - (1) Primary—*God-breathed* [θεόπνευστος]—breathed out by God
    - (2) Secondary—*and profitable* [ὠφέλιμος]—4-fold usefulness of Scripture
      - (a) *Teaching* [διδασκαλία]—what is right
      - (b) *Convicting* [ἐλεγχος]—exposes and convinces us of what is not right
      - (c) *Correction* [ἐπανόρθωσις]—how to get right
      - (d) *Training* [παιδεία] *in righteousness*—how to stay right
  - ii) The result of the Scriptures—*so that the man of God may be ...*
    - (1) The description—**adequate** [ἄρτιος] (emphatic)—able to meet all the demands, fully competent
    - (2) The basis of the adequacy—*being equipped* [pf. pass. ptc. ἐξαρτιζω] *for every good work*—spiritually and morally prepared for the task,

## 2) Faith Alone

- a) The definition: *Sola fide* emphasizes salvation as a free gift. The Roman Catholic Church of the time emphasized the use of indulgences (donating money) to buy status with God. Good works, including baptism, were seen as required for salvation. *Sola fide* stated that salvation is a free gift to all who accept it by faith (John 3:16). Salvation is not based on human effort or good deeds (Ephesians 2:9). (GotQuestions.org)
- b) The danger: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) Many in the church growth movement believe that sociological understanding of those in the pew is as important to the success of the gospel as is the biblical truth which is proclaimed. As a result, theological convictions are frequently divorced from the work of the ministry. The marketing orientation in many churches takes this even further, erasing the distinction between the biblical Word and the world, robbing Christ's cross of its offense, and reducing Christian faith to the principles and methods which bring success to secular corporations.
  - ii) While the theology of the cross may be believed, these movements are actually emptying it of its meaning. There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to him our sin and

imputed to us his righteousness. Because he bore our judgment, we now walk in his grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach him.

- c) A statement: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
    - i) We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.
    - ii) We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.
  - d) The main Scripture: Gal. 3:6-11
    - i) We are commanded to understand an important historical example—3:6-7
    - i) We need to submit to the authority of Scripture—3:8-9
    - ii) We need to embrace the inferred conclusion—3:9
      - (1) We honor the one we trust. Faith honors God because it considers him to be trustworthy.
- 3) Things for us to remember
- a) Embrace God's Word
  - b) Embrace God's way of salvation—by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

## Solas # 3-4

**Introduction:** We want to commemorate the Reformation which is generally recognized as beginning in October of 1517. Though this is not a hard and fast date, it is certainly worth addressing.

Review from last week's Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, and Grace Alone.

### 1) Grace Alone

- a) The definition: *Sola gratia* emphasizes grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done rather than what we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, "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." (GotQuestions.org)
- b) The danger: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature. This false confidence now fills the evangelical world; from the self-esteem gospel, to the health and wealth gospel, from those who have transformed the gospel into a product to be sold and sinners into consumers who want to buy, to others who treat Christian faith as being true simply because it works. This silences the doctrine of justification regardless of the official commitments of our churches.
  - ii) God's grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of cooperating with regenerating grace.
- c) A statement: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.
  - ii) We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.
- d) The main Scripture: Eph. 1:3-6
  - i) The Father has blessed us—1:3
  - ii) The Father has chosen us—1:4
  - iii) The Father has predestined us—1:5-6

### 2) Christ Alone

- a) The definition: *Solo Christo* (sometimes listed as *Solus Christus*, "through Christ alone") emphasizes the role of Jesus in salvation. The Roman Catholic tradition had placed church leaders such as priests in the role of intercessor between the laity and God. Reformers emphasized Jesus' role as our "high priest" who intercedes on our behalf before the Father. Hebrews 4:15 teaches,

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus is the One who offers access to God, not a human spiritual leader. (GotQuestions.org)

- b) The danger: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
    - i) As evangelical faith becomes secularized, its interests have been blurred with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism, and a substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, feeling for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and his cross have moved from the center of our vision. (Cambridge Declaration)
  - c) A statement: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
    - i) We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.
    - ii) We deny that the gospel is preached if Christ’s substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.
  - d) The main Scripture: Col. 1:15-20
    - i) The supremacy of Christ in material creation—1:15-17
    - i) The supremacy of Christ in redemption (spiritual creation)—1:18-20
    - ii) Summary and applications
      - (1) Only God can provide the infinite ransom for the sins of mankind. It is this Christ (as Paul describes Him) who shed His blood for our sins. An infinite sacrifice was made to satisfy the infinite demands of the holiness of God.
      - (2) Christ stands supreme over every conceivable entity except the Father Himself, and He is equal to the Father in every way because He is the very image of God.
        - (a) This is a key passage for dealing with Jehovah’s Witnesses. Their mistranslation adds the word “other” six times here to teach Christ was also created.
      - (3) This Christ is worthy of our praise and adoration. He is worthy of our love. He is worthy of our service. If the Father takes delight in Him, so should we.
- 3) Things for us to remember
- a)

Sola # 5

**Introduction:**

**1) To the Glory of God Alone**

- a) The definition: *Soli Deo gloria* emphasizes the glory of God as the goal of life. Rather than striving to please church leaders, keep a list of rules, or guard our own interests, our goal is to glorify the Lord. The idea of *soli Deo gloria* is found in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (GotQuestions.org)
- b) The danger: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing his work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.
  - ii) God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship; we are not. Our concern must be for God's (glory), not our own empires, popularity or success.
- c) A statement: (*The Cambridge Declaration*, 1996)
  - i) We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone.
  - ii) We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.
- d) The main Scripture: Rom. 11:33-36
  - i) The transcendence of God—11:33 (three exclamations about His transcendence)
    - (1) *O the depths* [βαθος]
      - (a) His *riches* [πλουτος]—seen in His blessings to both Jew and Gentile
      - (b) His *wisdom* [σοφια]—
        - (i) This is the only use of this word in the whole book.
        - (ii) God never acts arbitrarily or capriciously. There is a wise reason within Himself for what He does. He is not bound to merely react to His creation.

- (c) His *knowledge* [γνωσις]—seen in His election of both Jew and Gentile
    - (i) God never *learns* anything because He has always known everything.
  - (2) *How incomprehensible* [ανεξεραυνητος]
    - (a) *His judgments/decisions* [κριμα] can not be fully comprehended
    - (b) Refers to the decree God has purposed.
  - (3) *How untraceable* [ανεξιχνιαστος]
    - (a) *His ways* [οδος] cannot be fully examined or traced
      - (i) Refers to the methods He utilizes to accomplish His purpose.
    - (b) See Job 26:14. We simply see the “fringes of His ways.”
- ii) Why can't we fully understand Him?—11:34-35 (three questions from the OT)
- (1) “*For*”—this is the explanation
  - (2) Quote from Isaiah 40:13
    - (a) *Who has known the mind of YHWH?*
      - (i) Refers back to “How untraceable are His ways”
    - (b) *Who has become His counselor/adviser?*
      - (i) Refers back to “How incomprehensible are his judgments”
      - (ii) No one stands by God's shoulder and advises Him in what to do. Nor does He turn to someone and ask what He ought to do next.
  - (3) Quote from Job 41:11
    - (a) *Who has given to Him in advance that it might be paid back to him again?*
      - (i) Refers back to “the depth of the riches”
      - (ii) No one existed before God and no one gave something to God before he received it from God.
      - (iii) In other words, God is not obligated to anyone. He is free and self-sufficient. He owes no one anything, either Jew or Gentile.
- iii) The final declaration—11:36
- (1) God is ...
    - (a) The source [εκ] of all—*from Him*
    - (b) The agent [δια] of all—*through Him*
    - (c) The goal [εις] of all—*for Him*
  - (2) God should receive *the glory unto the ages. Amen.*
- 2) Things for us to remember
- a) God has a real and deep compassion for perishing sinners. His expression of pity and His pleas to them are a genuine indication of God's heart to spare those who have committed treason against His kingdom.
  - b) He has been complete and overflowing with satisfaction from all eternity. He needs no education. No one can offer anything to Him that doesn't already

come from Him. No one can bribe God or coerce Him in any way. You come to Him on His terms, or you don't come at all.

- c) The gospel is the good news that God is the all-satisfying end of all our longings, and that, even though He does not need us, and is in fact estranged from us because of our God-belittling sins, He has, in the great love with which He loved us, made a way for sinners to drink at the river of His delights through Jesus Christ. And we will not be enthralled by this good news unless we understand that He was not obligated to do this. He was not coerced or constrained by our value. *He* is the center of the gospel. The exaltation of *His* glory is the driving force of the gospel. The gospel is the gospel of *grace*. And grace is the pleasure of God to magnify the worth of God by giving sinners the right and power to delight in God without obscuring the glory of God.