

Here We Stand: The Five Sola's

INTRODUCTION

- A brief review of the Reformation begins...
- Through men like Philip Melancton, Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin reformed churches emerge in essentially 3 main streams; the Dutch-German church (*Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Synod of Dort*); The Swiss churches (*Second Helvetic Confession*) and 3rd the Scottish-English churches (*WCF and larger and shorter catechisms*).
- What is it *specifically* that distinguishes the Reformers from Rome? And the answer is "The 5 Sola's".

Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*)

- Sola Scriptura has to do with the role of Scripture in the governing life of the church.
- Scripture alone means that the word of God in the Bible is the highest and final form of authority in the church.
- The Reformers were not arguing for "Nuda Scriptura", that is, *Naked Scripture, only Scripture*; which is to say they were not suggesting that other writings such as church creeds/confessions had no place in the life of the church.
- Church creeds and confessions are very useful as a subordinate means of authority in the church, under the Scripture.
- In the Scripture, God Himself speaks, so it is inherently authoritative. II Tim 3:16, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God...*"
- Rome elevated other things to a place of equality with and even above Scripture (such as papal authority and traditions). So they believe in Scripture, but not Scripture alone as the sole infallible and final authority in the church.
- Reformers said that how we view and treat Scripture is how we are viewing and treating God **b/c *the Scripture is the written voice of the living God!***

- Now for a 1000 years the RCC has been reading the Latin Vulgate (*Jerome's translation in 4th century*). And the word for justification in Latin means "to make" righteous. But Luther was studying the Greek, the original language the NT was written in. And the word righteousness in the Greek means "to regard as righteous, to count as righteous, to declare as righteous!"
- Luther saw that the righteousness of God is not a righteousness infused into us, rather, the righteousness of God is a righteousness imputed to us!

And that understanding demolished the entire sacramental system! So he had to stand!

- The Scripture state that there is a righteousness from God that He offers sinners...then the question becomes, "how does the sinner obtain this righteousness??" By faith alone!

Faith Alone (*Sola Fide*)

- The RCC believed you needed faith to be saved, but not faith alone. They taught you needed faith "plus" participation in the sacramental system if God was to make you righteous.
- The Reformers taught that the righteousness of God was passively received not actively worked for. Faith was simply the open and empty hand that received the righteousness God offers freely by His grace!
- Faith is "not" the righteousness we are declared righteous with.
- Faith is nothing more than an instrument by which we receive the righteousness of God outside of us! Faith looks away to God and receives from His hand His free gift!
- Romans 5:1, "*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.*"
- How does this righteousness come to us? What is the empty hand of faith actually receiving when it receives this righteousness from God? Through Christ alone!

Christ Alone (*Solus Christus*)

- Christ alone is the only object of our faith. This righteousness from God comes through Jesus Christ alone! This righteousness from God is the righteousness of Christ! And this perfect righteousness comes to the sinner apart from works!

- Romans 3:23-24, *“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.”*
- The Reformers insisted that anything or anyone put in between the sinner and Christ is idolatry!
- To insist that indulgences or penance or any other act performed by a sinner can contribute to the perfect satisfaction that Christ alone provides...is to be utterly rejected as a doctrine of demons.
- When we say we are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, we are specifically referring to the doctrine of justification.
- WCF says, faith alone justifies, but faith is never alone in the one justified but is accompanied by all other saving graces.
- Scripture alone reveals the way sinners are made right with God...it is through Christ alone. And He is received by faith alone...and all this is by grace alone!

Grace Alone (*Sola Gratia*)

- Grace alone means refers to grace both in its provision for the sinner and application to the sinner!
- The Reformers stated that the Bible’s teaching is that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. But they further insisted that even the saving faith that the sinner uses to believe on Jesus Christ is a faith that is given to the sinner by God as a gift.
- Ephesians 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 man may boast.”*
- Faith is not something the sinner produces or provides. If a sinner is to exercise saving faith in Christ, then even that faith, must be given freely by God.
- The Reformed position is that the sinner makes no contribution to their salvation, including their faith!
- Rome’s system, for all of its insistence on faith and Christ and grace, said salvation is ultimately dependent upon man. Reformers said *“saving grace is sovereign grace!”* And all this necessarily leads to all the glory being God’s alone!

Glory to God Alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*)

- Isaiah 42:8, *"I am the LORD, that is my name; and My glory I will not give to another."*
- There is no greater crime than to rob God of His glory! And the Reformers believed that any departure from those 1st 4 Sola's would be to rob God of His glory!
- Whether we are dealing with the gross forms of Roman Catholicism that seeks to add to or subtract from the death of Christ with indulgences, or if we are dealing with those less gross forms of evangelicalism that seeks to exalt man's will as the determining factor in salvation...in either case, both are an attack on the glory of God!
- Romans 11:36, *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever! Amen"*
- After the division from the RCC, division rose from within Protestantism.

Historical Addendum

- James Arminius (who was a student of Theodore Beza, student of Calvin) came to reject the Reformed understanding and teaching of predestination and election, as outlined in Belgic Confession.
- Now Arminius died in 1609. But a year later those who he influenced drew up a document called "The Remonstrance of 1610".
- Their document consisted of 5 articles of faith. These 5 points were presented to the Reformed Church and they insisted that the BC and HC teaching on predestination and election as taught by the Reformers be changed.

There 5 points were...

- #1 – Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him.
- #2 – Man is never so completely controlled by God that He cannot reject God's grace.
- #3 – Election is a result of God looking down the corridors of time and foreseeing that a sinner will accept Christ, therefore God elects those who first elect Him
- #4 – Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith, (for the Remonstrance there was no gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they would only choose to believe.
- #5 – It ultimately rests with the believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost.

- A national Synod/council was convened at Dordrecht/Dort, Holland to examine the views of the Arminian's. After 6 months and of over 150 sessions, the result was the rejection of the 5 points of Arminianism.
- The Synod believed a mere rejection of these points would not be sufficient since the attacks were so deliberate and insistent. So the Synod responded with 5 counter-points, which became known as the 5 points of Calvinism, also known/better known as the "Doctrines of Grace."
- And what the Synod did was to re-affirm the confessional position of the Reformed churches with 5 counter points, which have been summarized under the acrostic TULIP.
 - Total Depravity
 - Unconditional Election
 - Limited Atonement
 - Irresistible Grace
 - Perseverance of the Saints

Resources

"The 5 Sola Series"

"Biblical authority after Babel", Kevin J Vanhoozer

"Why the Reformation still Matters", Michael Reeves and Tim Chester

"Whatever happened to the gospel of grace? – Rediscovering the doctrines that shook the world", James Montgomery Boice