



THE FIVE SOLAS: Soli Deo Gloria

Reformation Prelude, Part 8

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Today we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. As we're finishing our series on the five *Solas*, we'll be looking at *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Hear the Word of the Lord as we begin:

*And one called to another and said:
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

Isaiah 6:3

*Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!*

Psalm 24:8

*Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!*

Psalm 24:8

*Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.
The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days.*

Exodus 24:15-16

*And you said, "Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and
greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire."*

Deuteronomy 5:24

*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory
and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.*

Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

1 Chronicles 29:11

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!*

Psalm 115:1

*Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and atone for our sins,
for your name's sake!*

Psalm 79:9

*For my name's sake I defer my anger,
for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,*

*that I may not cut you off.
Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for how should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.*

Isaiah 48:9-11

*The Heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

Psalm 19:1

*Everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.*

Isaiah 43:7

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his
glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,
and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making
purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Hebrews 1:3

*Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we
should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for
adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the
praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved....
So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his
glory. 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,
who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to
the praise of his glory.*

Ephesians 1:4-6, 12-14

*To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all
generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Ephesians 3:21

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being
transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For
this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our
hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of
Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:6

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

This is just small sampling of the many, many times in Scripture where God speaks of His glory. It's the highlight reel—there are so many more. This thread runs all the way through Scripture as a central theme that God is passionate about His glory. *Soli Deo Gloria*—to God alone be the glory.

I want us to organize our time today by looking at three different questions:

- First, what is the glory of God?
- Second, how does *Soli Deo Gloria* fit within this series, that is, with the other *Solas*: Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone?
- Then I want us to leave with some very specific ways God tells us we are to bring Him glory. How do I live for the glory of God alone?

What is the glory of God?

We probably speak and sing of God's glory every week we gather. It's in our prayers. It's in the sermons. It's in the songs we sing. It's actually a difficult word to describe, a difficult concept to explain. Sometimes we have a small sense of what it is, but we don't have real clarity about what God means when He speaks of His glory. So I want to begin by making sure we are seeing how Scripture describes the glory of God.

What is the glory of God? We won't exhaust the topic, but I think it's helpful to see at least two big categories when we think of the glory of God: One is His intrinsic glory, and one is the glory that's been ascribed to Him by His creatures, His creation—the glory we give Him.

In his work called The Body of Divinity, Thomas Watson calls this first category “the intrinsic glory.” He says, “Glory is essential to the Godhead as light is to the sun. He is called ‘the God of glory’ in Acts 7:2. Glory is the sparkling of His deity.” It's a type of glory that is independent of anything else. It's not dependent on other things giving Him that glory; —it's His essence, Who He is. Perhaps you've heard the Hebrew word for glory used most often: *kabowd*. This could literally be translated weight or heaviness, but figuratively it's pointing toward something that is significant, important, of value or worth. It speaks of God's vastness, His greatness, His immensity—His divine essence. This is Who God is. Which is why sometimes this is even a name for God. He is the “God of glory” or the “King of glory” or the “Lord of glory.” He uses it as a name for Himself.

In Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17:5, He says, "*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*" So God's glory is not something that began when He spoke this world into existence. This is something God is. John Piper says, "God's glory is the outward radiance of the intrinsic beauty and greatness of His manifold perfections." He's getting that from Isaiah 6, where it says, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory.*" It does not say with His holiness. So he says God's holiness is the essence of Who He is, and when that radiates outward into existence, that's His glory.

Another way you can think of God's intrinsic glory is by seeing throughout Scripture where glory is used almost synonymously with His visible presence. So although the word isn't used in Genesis, we see the story opening with God being present with His people, with Adam and Eve in the garden. But through sin, there is separation. Then throughout the history of redemption, there are various times when God's presence again enters into this world. We see in Exodus 13 that the glory of God is shown through this pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, in this visible expression of God's presence.

In Exodus 33:18, Moses prays, "God, please show me Your glory." Remember what God said? He said, "I can't show you all of My glory. It would kill you." But God says, "What I will do is I'll hide you behind this rock, and I'll let just a glimpse of My glory pass by you." As that happened, Moses came down from the mountain and his face was radiating with the glory of God.

In Exodus 40:34, we see that God's glory filled the tabernacle—His presence. "*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*" Second Chronicles 5:14 speaks of the temple and how God's glory filled the house of God.

Then when Jesus comes into this world—when "*the Word became flesh*"—we beheld His glory (John 1:14). So Jesus—God in the flesh, His visible presence here—is His glory. Hebrews 1:3 says He is "*the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*" And then in the future, it speaks of Jesus coming again in Matthew 25:31, "*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.*" His glory is so closely united with Who God is—the display of His greatness, His intrinsic glory.

There's this second category—*ascribed* glory—where *Soli Deo Gloria* fits in. It means, "To God be the glory." As created beings, we exist to bring Him glory. You can see that's different from something that He is regardless of what we bring Him. It's closely united with praise, adoration and honor. It speaks of His name, His reputation, His renown and that He is worthy to

be praised. So in 1 Chronicles 16:29 (KJV), we are commanded to, “*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*” First Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) says, “*Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit.*”

So we’re saying God alone gets praise, honor, laud and the credit He deserves. We’re not taking any of that credit. Remember those passages where, speaking of God’s glory, it says over and over again, “For My name’s sake,” “For My reputation’s sake,” “For the way people view Me.” It’s for His renown. These two categories are related, though. We don’t add to God’s intrinsic glory—we point to it. What it means to “give God glory” is to put His glory on display, like you might display a trophy. It’s something that points to His greatness. When we “give” Him glory, we’re acknowledging that He is the God of glory, that He is the King of glory—and we’re saying, “That is true—look at Him.”

Those are the two different ways the Bible uses that same word, “glory.”

How does *Soli Deo Gloria* fit with the other *Solas*?

We’re in a series looking at Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone. I think it’s helpful for us to see how the glory of God alone fits in as well. It’s not so much a response to some controversy in the church, but it’s what all these other things are pointing to.

When we say we believe in Scripture alone, we are saying that Scripture is our supreme and final authority. We’re not despising other authorities, like creeds, councils, theologians, books or teachers. But we are saying they’re not equal authorities. All of those lesser authorities are submitting to the final authority which is God’s Word. That strips us from thinking that we have, in our own wisdom, something that is of equal value, equal weight, equal authority to what God has said in His Word. So by saying, “We believe in Scripture alone,” we’re saying all of our human wisdom submits to what God has revealed to us in His Word—and that alone downplays us and give Him glory.

The other three *Solas* answer the question how does God justify? So we say, “Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” This is speaking of our salvation—specifically, our justification. There are specific Scriptures that tell us how this truth points to God’s glory.

In Romans, Paul is building an argument that says all of us are justified by God’s grace, not by our works. In chapter three, he tells us it is only through the propitiation provided by Christ. Then in Romans 4 he explains that even our father Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. In verse two he says, “*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.*” Paul says something similar in 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 one may boast.”

The beginning part of Ephesians 1 is a lengthy prayer and praise, thanking God for spiritual blessings. Three times in this prayer we see this refrain: *“to the praise of his glorious grace.”* The song “Come, praise and glorify” is rooted in that prayer. Paul is saying every aspect of our salvation—God redeeming us—was ultimately for the end of bringing Him glory. Ephesians 1:11-12 says, *“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.”* So here God’s sovereignty is working all things according to His purposes and according to His desires, *“so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”*

Another aspect of reformed theology that comes out of the Reformation is to think of God’s sovereignty over all things, including His sovereignty over salvation. Romans 8:29-30 says, *“For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined....And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”* It’s a chain of events where God is acting to choose us, draw us, call us, justify us and ultimately one day to glorify us. He is sovereign over all that.

This takes away any hope for us to boast. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, Paul explains that God did not choose the wise things of this world, but rather He chose the weak things so that He would receive the glory. So *Soli Deo Gloria* fits in with these other truths almost like a capstone. It’s what everything else is pointing to. Or said another way, it’s truly believing what these other teachings are leading to. It takes away any thought we might have that we, by our merit or good works, have somehow worked our way to God.

How do I live for the glory of God alone?

So how do we glorify God and live for His glory alone? This is our mission statement as a church: “To bring glory to God through Spirit-transformed lives by the beauty and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” So, God the Spirit is at work to change us through the good news of the gospel—but the aim of everything we do is to bring glory to God. The Westminster Catechism opens by asking, “What is the chief end of man?” And it answers, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” That’s man’s chief end and primary purpose. There are of course many things we’re called to do, including loving God and loving our neighbor—but the ultimate end of all this is to bring glory to God and to enjoy Him together.

So I want us to look at five different things in Scripture that specifically say, “Through this, we bring glory to God.” By doing these things, we bring glory to God. Nothing about this

sermon is exhaustive; this is a huge topic, so even these five things are limited. I looked at an article that listed 20 ways to bring glory to God, with all the Scripture references next to them. But we don't have time for that many, so let's look at these five. I think this will help us focus more on God's glory.

1. Honor Him as God. Romans 1 speaks of those who do not believe in God. Paul opens this section describing the sinfulness of mankind. Verses 21-22 say, *"Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."* These people took the knowledge they had about God through creation, but they suppressed the truth and did not honor Him as God. They exchanged God's glory for images of created things.

So we can see this as a call to saving faith in God. We should say, "I believe You are the Creator of all things. I believe You are sovereign over this world. I believe You are holy and righteous, and before You I am sinner in desperate need of Your grace. Otherwise I fully deserve Your divine wrath against me." Then we must trust that Jesus Christ came into this world, took on flesh, lived perfectly for us—doing what we could not do. He then died for our sins. Romans 3:23 says that God put forward Christ as a propitiation by His blood. When we receive His redemption by faith that honors Him as God. We take Him at His Word and bow before Him, realizing that apart from Him we are hopeless.

2. Live a changed life. This is a broad description of the many ways the Bible tells us that through doing good works we bring glory to God. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus says, *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* When we seek to obey and submit to God, this proclaims to others that He is great, that He is God. It tells the world, "I am not my own. I am submitted to a higher authority."

This is what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 6, dealing with the subject of sexual immorality. Even in this realm, we acknowledge that God is the supreme authority. We aren't driven just by what feels good to us or by what is popular in our culture. Paul specifically says we are not our own. In verses 18-20 he says, *"Flee from sexual immorality....Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* It brings glory to God when we say, "God, I submit my life to You. I've been purchased by Your blood. I am no longer the lord of my life—You are."

3. Live out your calling, dependent on God and for the good of others. We live out our callings in a variety of ways, through whatever He has called us to in this life. But we need to live in a way that shows our dependence on Him, looking to Him for strength and our goal should be the good of those around us.

Let's see how this is explained in 1 Peter 4:7-11. As Peter draws this letter to a close, he gives his readers some final charges: *"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."* This implies that we have been given a variety of giftings. God doesn't call all of us to the same ministry. But whatever our calling is, we are to use it in a way that serves others. *"Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies."*

Now listen to how he finishes this: *"In order that in everything...."* Whatever you do, whatever God has called you to in this life, do it in a way that serves others and is dependent on God's strength. We do this so that in everything—that's very broad—*"God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

Psalm 19:1 says, *"The Heavens declare the glory of God."* How do they do that? I think they do it just by being there. They exist because God made them and their existence is what He intended it to be. So the stars and planets and solar systems—everything that's around us, even the plants and animals—God made it all to bring Him glory. In this same way, Peter is telling us that in the variety of giftings God has given us, we are to use them in such a way that brings Him glory through our submission to Him and our care for others.

Perhaps you're struggling to find value in your job, retirement or wherever God has you at the moment. I think it's helpful to realize that the different callings and life settings God puts us in are given value when we give our best to what we do. If you're a cashier or a banker or a plumber, if you're serving communion or serving in the nursery—if you're a mom or dad or wife or husband or child—just seek to live out these callings for His glory. And not only your jobs, but your hobbies or talents can be valuable to Him. If we seek to live all aspects of our lives consciously trying to serve others in dependence on God, these can all point to the glory of our creative God.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul is speaking to a controversy where the people were unsure of whether or not they should eat certain meat or drink certain things. He concludes in verse 31, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* So even with

mundane things we think might not matter or don't have eternal value, these too can be done for the glory of God.

4. Proclaim the glory of God to those who don't know Him. We'll use one passage as an example: *"Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!"* (1 Chronicles 16:24). God has called us to declare, that is, to speak of His greatness, vastness and divinity to the nations, telling them about our God and His marvelous works. *"For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods"* (verse 25).

5. Sing and declare the glory of God to God. There are many commands that tell us to do this. Psalm 29:2 says, *"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness."* Through gathered worship and private worship, we are we're speaking to the Lord the glory, praise and credit that He deserves and that is due His name. Psalm 66:1-2 says, *"Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!"* We do this weekly as we gather as a church. We're told to sing of the glory of the Lord, the glory of His name. We're to shout for joy to God. We're not just singing about God; we're also singing to God, ascribing to Him this glory He deserves.

Worshiping God as God, coming to Him, humbling ourselves in faith, trusting in Him to save us—all these things bring Him glory. Seeking then to live a life transformed, showing that we are not our own—that brings Him glory. Living out our calling in a variety of ways, depending on God, living for the good of others—that brings Him glory. Proclaiming His glory to the lost, to those who don't know the gospel—that brings Him glory. And finally, to sing and shout to Him, ascribing to Him the glory due His name—that is how we express *Soli Deo Gloria*, to God alone be the glory.

So church, *"whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31). *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen"* (Romans 11:36).

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