

Remembering and Reforming by the 5 Solas (Psalm 19)

I love that new song with old truths we remember today, 5 solas (5 ‘alone’ statements of faith). 500 years ago in the dark ages on Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther’s 95-point paper lit a spark that got a Reformation fire going. It was a return to scripture, a reformed faith led to transformed western civilization. After darkness, light came that spread across Europe and other continents. In the language of Europe, the Latin motto *Soli deo Gloria*—to God alone be glory—drove the Protestant movement, named for their *protesting* abuses in the Roman Catholic Church that obscured God’s glory. *Sola Scriptura* was another dividing defining mark, scripture alone the only ultimate authority for the church. Their gospel battle cries also were *sola gratia, sola fide, solo Christo*, put together, *salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone* – all in contrast to Catholicism and cults or other groups since then.

We’re not Lutherans or here to glorify Luther, he wanted all glory to go to the Lord. The Reformers weren’t perfect, the reformation was incomplete in infant baptism, etc., but when it comes to salvation and the key doctrines of the faith, we stand on Reformation soil indebted to the reformed faith of our fathers. We’re not bound to past *reformed* confessions, but we benefit from religious freedoms that came through their great tradition, and I like to think of myself and our church as *reforming* (in present tense, always reforming)

Jeremiah 6:16 *This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls* (NIV). Our world stands at a crossroads again as it did 500 years ago, and as it did in Jeremiah’s day, but the Lord says ‘*ask for the ancient paths...where the good way is.*’ Walking in the old ways is good for our souls. These old truths recovered in the Reformation need to be rekindled in our generation. It’s good to look back hundreds of years and learn from history so we don’t repeat its errors, and in Jeremiah’s day, ancient paths from hundreds of years back were in the book of Psalms. The timeless truths rediscovered in the 1500s were written 3000 years ago

Today in Psalm 19 I want to celebrate and commemorate God’s faithfulness in history and reaffirm these 5 historic truths from Bible times we need in our times. The 5 Solas of the Reformation weren’t new, they’re in the Old Testament, especially the Psalms of David around 1000 BC. Reformation in Luther’s heart really began in 1513 AD studying and teaching the Psalms. The Psalms gave him courage to do what he did in 1517 and sustained him. Psalm 19 is one psalm with 5 Solas for our remembering and reforming by.

If you're taking notes, #1 is Soli Deo Gloria, To God alone be glory (v. 1-6)

¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* ² *Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.* ³ *There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.* ⁴ *Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,* ⁵ *which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.* ⁶ *Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.* ***PRAY***

The heading in the ancient Hebrew texts says David wrote Psalm 19. It was a song for the music director for choral or congregational worship. One of the things we should be thankful for from the Reformation is that it brought back singing to the church, songs from the Psalms like Luther's A Mighty Fortress, and other hymns and spiritual songs that adapted the language of scripture into worship music in the language of the people (not just a dry Latin liturgy no one could understand). God's glory had been obscured by dark ages of tradition and superstition and man-centered religion but Luther and others sought reformation and revival in worship for God's glory alone.

The Latin word *solis* is in English in words like soli-tary, *Deo Gloria* is glory to God, like the Christmas carol *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (glory to God in the highest). In Ps 19:1, it's the heavens that are giving highest glory to God as the solitary supreme sovereign Creator, the heavens sing out 'to God be the glory, great things He hath done.' v. 1 adds poetry in the skies proclaiming like a choir His handiwork, like a musical masterpiece by Bach signed SDG

v. 2 is saying this message of God's glory is being poured out all day every day by the heavenly hosts, and every night dazzling glory is revealed. Sun, moon, and stars in courses above, join with all nature in manifold witness. All creation of God our King, Lifts up its voice to sing. We joined the song last week: 'burning sun with golden beam...silver moon with softer gleam, O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!' v. 3-4 are saying the universe is the theater of God's glory and everyone on earth has a front-row seat and free admission to this unceasing symphony of glory that needs no word or translation, its backdrop a planetarium Omnimax continual loop in 3D on a universe-size screen. Creation sings of a God above the heavens, a God of wonders beyond our galaxy and the universe declares His majesty. Rom 10:18 quotes Ps 19:3 and Rom 1:20 says His power and divine nature are clearly seen in nature, making all without excuse who don't glorify God

The end of v. 4-6 uses the image of the sun. God's glory is seen in the daily cycle of sunrise and sunset. David paints a poetic picture of it like a groom whose face shines radiantly on his wedding day by his bride after their rabbi marries them in the wedding chamber canopy/tent the Jews still call *huppa*. The next poetic metaphor is the sun like a strong runner with joy in running. I think of Eric Liddle's quote in Chariots of Fire: 'When I run, I feel God's pleasure.' The sun is beaming as it runs its course across the sky from our perspective, its running message is this: God's glory is what it's all about and where joy is to be found. I think of Olympics torch-bearers holding a torch as they run their course with smiles on their face to a watching world. The sun gives running commentary on our chief end: glorify and enjoy God

Reformation Study Bible: The world is a stage for God. He is the chief actor who appears front and center. No curtain can fall and obscure His presence ...for anyone whose mind and heart are open, the glory of God is wonderful to see--from the billions of [big stars] in the heavens to...subatomic particles that make up the tiniest of molecules. What an incredible God we serve.

We're to see in the sun a daily parable of God's glory. Even the word *sola* reminds us of the solar system and we know more than David did about the blazing center that gives light and light and warmth, picturing God's glory. Ps 148 says '*Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens...For His name **alone** is exalted; His **glory** is above earth and heaven.*' That sums up Soli Deo Gloria, glory to God alone

Application: are you declaring the glory of God? Ps 96 calls us to declare His glory to the whole world. That's the purpose of all God has created, is that your purpose? It's not just the skies that are God's handiwork, the Bible calls believers His handiwork and calls us to proclaim His workmanship by our lives and by our lips. Day to day the speech that's pouring out of our mouths should be grateful, not grumbling (that's how Romans applies this truth and we saw last week Phil 2 says we're not to complain so we can be the shining lights to the world). How are you doing in applying last week? Were you a light by your speech last week, with words of life and warmth?

69:30: '*I will...glorify him with thanksgiving...*' 79:9 '*Help us, O God our Savior, **for the glory of your name**...forgive our sins for your name's sake.*' 115:1 '*Not to us, O LORD, not to us **but to your name be the glory**...*' (NIV). That's applying to God alone be the glory, no glory to us, He alone gets all credit for any good. We apply it by thanksgiving and God-centered prayer.

Lest we forget this first point, God gives us sunsets, sunrise and starry skies. As you see the sun, be reminded of this image of rising and daily running its course with joy to God's glory. That's a metaphor but the reality is scripture calls us as we rise and go through the course of our day to let our light shine as well, to have radiant and evident joy as we run the race God has for us. In whatever we do, we're to do all to the glory of God alone, *Soli Deo Gloria*.

That's Point#1, now Point #2. *Sola Scripture* – Scripture Alone (v. 7-8)

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes

Scripture alone has the power to do all that. Those are 4 different titles for scripture (*law, testimony, precepts, commandment*) with 4 results: *reviving souls, making wise simple* [minds], *rejoicing hearts*, and *enlightening eyes*. It can do all that because scripture alone has these 4 qualities: *perfect, sure, right, pure*. In other words, it's inerrant (without errors), infallible (it can't fail), and infinitely sufficient. This point really deserves its own sermon and I did a whole sermon on v. 7-8 before, other sermons on Solas in Eph 1 or a message '5 Solas-Ministry Convictions.' I'm planning a series next year to give focus to each sola and why we want to fly high these banners of truth.

But for today and for this psalm we need to see that God's glory in the skies is not all we need, we need scripture to guide us to how we can glorify Him. Scripture alone shows us the way of salvation and the authority for our life. The heavens show us His glory in the sense of His visible power and beauty and importance, the Holy Bible shows us His glory in the sense of all God's attributes, the fullness of who God is spiritually, intimately, to us personally

v. 1-6	v. 7-8
God's Glory in the world	God's Glory in His Word
Natural or general revelation	Supernatural or special revelation
Lets us know there is a God	Lets us know God relationally
Supremacy of God's glory	Sufficiency of God's Word

I said this my first Sunday here 11 years ago, the great need of the hour is a high view of God and His Word. That's the great need of the church and it's your great need as individuals or families, and it's the world's greatest need. My wife and I have been to the spot in Germany where Luther stood trial before his world, Roman Catholic leaders and the Emperor of Rome himself

He stood up to them and said ‘Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason (for I trust neither pope nor council alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures...my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant...since to act against one’s conscience is neither safe nor right. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me.’
That sums it up: scripture alone, nothing else, has ultimate binding authority

Application: Is it scripture alone that binds your conscience? Will you take your stand on God's Word and stand alone with God's help? Do you look to scripture as your ultimate authority? When you need help with a spiritual life issue, do you turn first to Google or to God's Word? Don't substitute the voice of Siri for the voice of Scripture. Don't even just take the words of a good man as spiritual counsel if he can't explain how his words are rooted in truths of the Word of God. When v. 7-9 describe the power of scripture, it uses the phrase 6x '*of the LORD.*' Anything that does not have this source, anything else from the world, cannot have these qualities or these results.

No other writing (Catholic Catechism or tradition, Koran, Book of Mormon, even evangelical books), Scripture alone stands alone. It's above scientific theories. Psychological ideas or secular thinking bows to scripture not vice versa. Our church may not be flashy or fun or into fads, but we strive to be faithful to the sufficient Word of God. Scripture alone does what's in v. 7-8 but we must be in it, it has to be in us. Will you recommit to sola scriptura?

To fully benefit from it requires a 3rd point: Sola Gratia - Grace alone
v. 7 says God's perfect scripture revives the soul, or NKJV has 'converting.'
It can mean either conversion by grace or the renewing or restoring of souls by grace. The Law of the Lord in particular shows us our need of grace and it's the Spirit who graciously uses scripture to convict, convert, comfort or continually revive with new life. The end of v. 8 also implies God's grace as it mentions '*enlightening the eyes.*' Scripture alone *without grace* will not save a sinner, we need God to open our eyes to the truth or we won't see it and our souls won't benefit from it. Without grace in v. 7-8 we won't have v. 9, the fear of the Lord that's the beginning of wisdom. 'Tis grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieve, how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed?' By amazing grace God's Law shows us we are wretches, His testimony becomes my testimony that He saved a wretch like me, His commandment shows me I'm lost, but His precepts show me how I'm found, though I was blind, now I see the gospel by grace alone.

Luther wrote on Psalm 51: 'both the Law and the Gospel...prove with clear and certain arguments that we are sinners and are saved by grace alone.' If you want to apply further, study Ps 51 *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion ... Wash me thoroughly...cleanse me from my sin...Purify me...blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me ... Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me... Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You* (NAS). God answers that prayer in Ps 19 using scripture by His grace alone.

That leads to a 4th point, by grace alone through faith alone - Sola Fide
 Fide is the Latin word we get fidelity from, faithfulness, it's not just a 1 time mental assent to facts, think of fidelity in faithful relationship like marriage, where you do good for your spouse because of love you have, not to earn it. Eph 2:8-10 *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...* So we're not saved by works, but we're saved for works. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, but not by a so-called 'faith' that is alone, that has no works, no fruit, or evidences or grace. In Gal 5:6 Paul says no religious action *'has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself...'* (NIV). Faith only, or faith alone is what counts in God's sight, true saving faith that expresses itself in fidelity to the Lord we love.

Luther saw this article, *sola fide*, salvation or justification by faith alone as the article that makes a church rise or fall. Any denial of this principle of faith alone, apart from any works, is departure from the true church. Luther got that from Paul in Galatians and Rom 3-4 where Paul got it from David. Paul quotes a bunch of psalms to set up our need to be justified, that means declared righteous, by grace alone through faith alone: *'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift...to be received by faith...justified by faith apart from the works of the law...faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one whom God counts righteousness apart from works'* (3:23-25, 28, 4:5-6).

So Luther didn't invent this 500 years ago, David spoke of this doctrine in the psalms. Ps 19 shows his faith in the Word of God as Paul will say later in Romans faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Faith in Heb 11:1-6 is believing God created all, He exists (Ps 19:1-6), and rewards those who seek Him. Ps 19:11 ends with rewards of fidelity to God's Word.

We don't have time to unpack the rest of Ps 19 in detail, but v. 10 shows us what saving faith in the heart looks like as opposed to intellectual belief in the head. Faith sees God's Word as more valuable than money and sweeter than honey, v. 10 says. True trusting involves treasuring, seeing as precious and sweet, more so than anything in this life. Part of what Luther wrote this week 500 years ago explained that indulgences from the pope were not this treasure, Thesis #62: The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God. That's what *sola fide* trusts in and treasures.

At the end of v. 14 David calls the Lord '*my rock.*' In another psalm, David uses that phrase of his faith: God '*alone is my rock and salvation.*' That's Ps 62, it says: '*O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. Trust in him at all times...*' (NIV). Can you say that, a mighty fortress is my God? Is your faith in God alone? Is it in Christ alone your trust and hope is found?

That takes us to the 5th final motto – *Solo Christo* – in Christ alone

Alternate *Solus Christus*= Christ alone, *Solo Christo*=in/through/by Christ alone. Salvation is not a duet, me and Christ (or Christ feat. me), it's a solo, Christ alone. He is the only performer on stage in the drama of redemption. He's the sole figure standing alone as Redeemer, not a perpetual virgin, no Pope or priest has any part in forgiving sin. In contrast to Catholic theology, Mary is no co-redemptrix, the Mass is not a repeated sacrifice, the merits of dead saints have nothing to do with it, there is one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus alone, and His redeeming work was done once for all.

Ps 19:14 ends with David confessing the Lord is '*my Redeemer.*' Who is the Redeemer? In the NT, we learn there is a Redeemer, Jesus God's own Son, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One. David wrote of his Redeemer to come in Ps 22 to be pierced through hand and feet, to have clothing divided by lot, to have bones put out of joint, to have people mock Him, and God the Father forsaking Him, which Jesus Christ quoted on the cross. David didn't know the Lord by the name Jesus, but he wrote of Him in Ps 23 as the Lord is my shepherd who '*restores my soul*' (same phrase as Ps 19:7). Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who restores my soul through His Word.

This Redeemer passed through the heavens like v. 1 to declare the glory of God, to proclaim God's works and words to the world. Day by day gracious speech poured out of His mouth, and night to night He revealed knowledge to His followers. He called them to take His message to the end of the world

Like the end of Ps 19:6, there's nothing hidden from Him, no secret sin can withstand the holy heat of judgment to come for all He's not Redeemer of. His face at the transfiguration shone like the sun He made. He came for His bride and it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross where the sun He created went dark, but after darkness light shone as He rose and like a strong man, heaven's Champion completed His course of redemption. John 1:5 says Christ's *'light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...'*⁹ *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world...'*¹⁴ *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...*

Col 1:14 says in Christ alone we have redemption, and it adds that *'Christ is...supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms...Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together...he is first in everything'* (v. 15-18 NLT). NKJV *'that in all things He may have the pre-eminence,'* or NIV *'that in everything [Christ] might have the supremacy.'*

Christ is the incarnate Word who personified the written Word of Ps 19:7, the perfect Lawgiver who restores souls. Christ is the wisdom of God, Paul says. Christ embodied v. 8-9, rejoicing hearts, enlightening eyes, and His truth endures forever. Like v. 10 He's my treasure, sweetest name I know.

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or **gold**; I'd rather be His than have riches untold...
He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom; He's **sweeter than honey from out the comb...**

Jesus came like v. 11 as the Servant who kept God's Word for great reward. Only He could fulfill v. 12-13 by being declared innocent from any sin of omission of commission. Like the end of v. 13 He was truly blameless, and only He perfectly lived out v. 14 in the words of His mouth and meditations of His heart always being acceptable in God's sight so we can be accepted in Christ alone. He is the Lord who is the rock on whom the church is built, a Rock of Ages. On Christ the solid we stand, our cornerstone, solid ground.

Is it in Christ alone that your hope is found? Is He your light, your strength? Does He have the supremacy in everything, the pre-eminence in your life? Is He your Lord, your rock, and your Redeemer? If not, I urge you to turn from your presumptuous sins to Him, trust Him and treasure Him. Scripture alone is sufficient to save by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone. If He's your Lord, keep reforming, transforming by these great truths. Let's recommit and rekindle them and pray for revival