

FBC POWELL, 10-29-17 AM NOTES
Sola Deo Gloria – “The Glory of God Alone”
Various Scriptures
#6 in Series, “What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Reformation”

Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone, the authority of Scripture; **Solus Christus** – Christ Alone, the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Savior; **Sola Gratia** – Grace Alone, salvation is a gift from God; **Sola Fide** – Faith Alone, works have no part in obtaining salvation; **Sola Deo Gloria** – God’s Glory Alone, all that God does is for His glory.

“The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men...This low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us...With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine presence. We have lost our spirit of worship...”
—A. W. Tozer

Hebrews 12:29 “For our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrews 10:31 “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

I. The Meaning of *Sola Deo Gloria*

- God Created Us for His Glory

Isaiah 43:7 “Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

- God Chose Israel for His Glory

Jeremiah 13:11b “I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me, declares the Lord, that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.”

- God the Father Sent Jesus Christ Into the World so That the Gentiles Would Honor God

Romans 15:9a “On behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy.”

- The Father Will Send Jesus a Second Time so That All the Redeemed Will Marvel at His Glory.

2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.”

- We See the Ultimate Mission of the Church Spelled Out

Psalm 96:3 “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.” Why do we exist on planet earth? We exist to “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.”

“The glory of God is the outward radiance of the intrinsic worth and beauty and greatness of God’s manifold perfections.”

—9 Marks

2 Thessalonians 1:9b “The glory of His power.”

Ephesians 1:6b “...the glory of His grace.”

Hebrews 1:3a (NIV) “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory...”

II. *Sola Deo Gloria* and Worldview

A. A Man-Centered Worldview

"Whenever in the church biblical authority has been lost [*Sola Scriptura*], Christ has been displaced [*Solus Christus*], the gospel [*Sola Gratia*] has been distorted, or faith [*Sola Fide*] 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."

—The Cambridge Declaration

1. Creation was for us to have a beautiful place to live until we go to heaven.
2. Prayer is the means we get from God what will allow us to fulfill our goals and make us successful.
3. Suffering is to teach us to pray with faith because if we have adequate faith, we don't have to suffer.
4. Sin is bad because it robs us of the favor of God that He would pour out on us if we would just stop sinning.
5. Salvation is so we can have our sins forgiven and have God's favor here and thus success and prosperity.
6. Evangelism is our attempt to get people (by whatever means are necessary) to ask Christ into their life so that they will have a better life here and heaven when they die.
7. Missions is for the purpose of helping people in other cultures have the same successful and comfortable life that we have and then go to heaven when they die.

B. A God-Centered Worldview – *Sola Deo Gloria*

1. Creation has the primary function of glorifying God. **Psalms 19:1** "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."
2. Prayer is all about God and His glory. **John 14:13** "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, **so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**"
3. Suffering is a unique opportunity to put God's attributes on display. **1 Peter 5:10-11** "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."
4. Sin is not primarily about what it robs **us** of; sin is about how it robs **God** of His glory.
5. Salvation is primarily about God and His glory. Ephesians 2 speaks of God's love, mercy, and grace in saving us and then says in **Ephesians 2:7 (HCSB)**, "So that in the coming ages He might **display** the immeasurable riches of His grace in [His] kindness to us in Christ Jesus."
6. Evangelism is all about the power of God through the Gospel as He gives life to those who were dead.
7. Missions is not primarily about the lost in other cultures and their need; it is about God and the fact that He is worthy of their worship and He is not receiving it. The goal of missions is to see rebels become worshippers because God is worthy. *Sola Deo Gloria!*

Sermon 6: *Sola Deo Gloria* – “The Glory of God Alone”

Various Scriptures

At the beginning of the 16th century the visible, organized church was in really bad shape. The 16th century church bore no resemblance to the 1st century church – none whatsoever. The authority of Scripture had been replaced with a complicated, ever changing “fluid” authority that changed with the installation of the next pope. The simple Gospel was almost completely unknown to the common man or even the priests. There was rampant immorality among many priests and even some of the popes. The people had nowhere to turn because they were not even allowed to possess a Bible translated into their own language. To even come up with a translation in the language of the people was punishable by death. There was the Greek, the Hebrew, or the Latin.

There were many attempts to reform the church before 1517, and while it may seem that they all failed, looking back at the big picture we see that they helped lay a foundation for the Reformation. Briefly allow me share with you about a man, an English reformer who lived and died more than a century before the reformation. His name was John Wycliffe. Historians today call him “The Morning Star of the Reformation.” Wycliffe was born somewhere around 1330. He was educated at Oxford University, having earned three degrees there. Eventually Wycliffe became Oxford’s leading philosopher and theologian. As Wycliffe’s views began to line up with Scripture, he was called before the church authorities and the Pope condemned Wycliffe’s teachings.

As time went by, Wycliffe began to teach that only the Scriptures contain the whole of God’s revelation and all that is necessary for salvation. He believed and taught that when the Scriptures contradicted papal and church authority, the Scriptures always took precedence over everything else the church was teaching. Concerning the popes, Wycliffe taught that their authority was under the Scriptures authority and that their lives should have the moral character of the Apostle Peter. In addition, they should lead a humble life spent in serving the church and providing an example of humility and Christian goodness. That was definitely not a description of the popes of that time. That is just a sampling of the things Wycliffe taught. Eventually he declared that the institution of the Papacy itself is Antichrist!

As time went by, Wycliffe was convinced that the Bible needed to be translated into the language of the people and widely distributed. Wycliffe oversaw the attempts of those who worked with him in translating the Scriptures into the language of the English people. Even today, scholars marvel at the accuracy of what came to be called, *The Wycliffe Bible*.

Wycliffe was fired from his professorship at Oxford and was condemned as a heretic. Before Wycliffe was martyred, he died a natural death and was buried in the church cemetery. The hatred of the church leaders was so malicious that dug up his bones and burned them. The influence of Wycliffe helped lay the foundation of the Reformation [Material taken from an online article by Vance Christie, *John Wycliffe – Morningstar of the Reformation*]

We will now move from the 14th century to the 16th century – specifically to October 31, 1517. This is the date that is widely accepted as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In the sovereign working of God, there was a widespread movement by many Bible scholars across central and Western Europe to speak out against the abuses of the church. Remember, there were no denominations as we know them today.

The Reformation wasn’t really organized. Men like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Cranmer, Bucer, and a host of other Bible scholars began to say “enough!” Like a small snowball rolling down a steep hill, the movement began to grow. The Reformers’ views and teaching were summarized by historians around five short slogans that have come to be called “the five solas.” *Sola* is the Latin word for “alone.” The five *solas* are:

Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone, the authority of Scripture;

Solus Christus – Christ Alone, the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Savior;

Sola Gratia – Grace Alone, salvation is a gift from God;

Sola Fide – Faith Alone, works have no part in obtaining salvation;

Sola Deo Gloria – God’s Glory Alone, all that God does is for His glory.

In this last message of this series on the Reformation, we will examine the 5th *Sola*, the Glory of God alone.

As we've said each week in this series, the 21st Century church is also in need of reformation. We are especially in need of reformation when it comes to the doctrine of God. In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer said this about the doctrine of God and the church of more modern times:

The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men... This low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us... With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine presence. We have lost our spirit of worship...

[A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, page 6-7]

Because the church has lost its sense of the majesty and awe of God, our culture doesn't take God seriously. Church growth “experts” are telling pastors to lighten up, use more humor, and don't deal with heavy doctrinal subjects. The results are silly skits, Bible light, funny stories, and little if anything about the God who is described in Hebrews 12:29: “For our God is a consuming fire.” Ignored in most churches are verses like Hebrews 10:31: “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

When we talk about the reformers and the doctrine of God, we are talking about the return to focusing on **the glory of God – Sola Deo Gloria**. The greatest subject that could ever occupy our minds is the glory of God. “The glory of God” is a phrase that is thrown around a lot, but few people comprehend even the basics about the glory of God.

I. The Meaning of *Sola Deo Gloria*

Let's examine a few of the passages in Scripture that deal with the glory of God.

- **God created us for His glory**

Isaiah 43:7: “Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

- **God chose Israel for His glory**

Jeremiah 13:11b: “I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me, declares the Lord, that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.”

- **God the Father sent Jesus Christ into the world so that the Gentiles would honor God and give Him glory.**

Romans 15:9a: “on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy.”

- **The Father will send Jesus a second time so that all the redeemed will marvel at His glory.**

2 Thessalonians 1:9-10: “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.”

- **We see ultimate mission of the church spelled out**

Psalm 96:3 “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.” Why do we exist on planet earth? We exist to “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.”

Let's delve a little deeper into the meaning of the glory of God. [Warning: this can cause brain cramps!] The glory of God is not one of His perfections (attributes) like “love” or “omnipotence” or “omniscience.” One man put it this way: “The glory of God is the outward radiance of the intrinsic worth and beauty and greatness of God’s manifold perfections.” [9 Marks article, *The Reformation and the Glory of God*]

What is the glory of God? It is the attributes, the perfections of God put on display. To put it another way, the glory of God is the beauty and greatness of His perfections. Look at some illustrations of that definition. 2 Thessalonians 1:9b: speaks of “the glory of His power.” Ephesians 1:6b: speaks of “...the glory of His grace.” Every attribute or perfection of God is a facet of the diamond we call the glory of God.

It is the glory of God that acts as the glue to keep the other four “*solas*” together. The Scriptures reveal to us the perfections of God; Christ alone personifies all the perfections of God. Hebrews 1:3a (NIV): “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory...” Salvation by grace alone glorifies the God of grace who gives us grace! Faith alone glorifies the true God who is so holy that our works at their best are “filthy rags.” Oh, how glorious is our God who saves by Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone!

II. Sola Deo Gloria and Worldview

No doctrine affects all the other doctrines like the doctrine of God and His glory does. How we understand and then prioritize God and His glory influences what we believe about the doctrine of man, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of last things, the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of sanctification, and every other biblical doctrine. How we view the doctrine of God and His glory affects how we view suffering, trials, our vocation, our family – it affects every area of our life.

First, I want to focus in on how *Sola Deo Gloria* affects our worldview. Your worldview is like the lens you look through that determines how you see all of life. Your worldview determines how you understand your place and your significance on the planet. There are many different worldviews that people have come up with, but basically there are only two possible worldviews (with some sub-categories under these two). The two possibilities are a man centered worldview and a God centered worldview.

A. A Man Centered Worldview

A man centered worldview is the worldview of 100% of those without Christ and I am sad to say that it is the worldview of the majority of those who profess to have savingly believed in Christ. Rather than focus on those outside the church, I want to focus on how this man centered worldview has crept into much of the evangelical church.

Perhaps the best summary of the prevalence of this man centered worldview in the church today is from a document called *The Cambridge Declaration* drawn up by a group calling themselves, “The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.” Their mission statement reads as follows: “The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals exists to call the church, amidst our dying culture, to repent of its worldliness, to recover and confess the truth of God’s Word as did the Reformers, and to see that truth embodied in doctrine, worship, and life.”

Let me just quote just one part of that important document as it relates to how a man centered worldview has permeated much of the church today.

Whenever in the church biblical authority has been lost [*Sola Scriptura*], Christ has been displaced [*Solus Christus*], the gospel [*Sola Gratia*] has been distorted, or faith [*Sola Fide*] 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.
[*The Cambridge Declaration*]

This document is saying that the church has adopted a man centered worldview instead of a God centered God glorifying worldview.

A man centered worldview sees God existing for man. In the church, this worldview is “Christianized humanism.” God’s chief attribute in a man centered worldview is love, not a biblical love, but a humanized kind of love. Man’s chief attribute under this worldview is his free will that must be convinced to “accept Christ” by whatever means is necessary (psychology, good marketing, emotional appeals, fear, or manipulation). God is not truly sovereign in this worldview; man ultimately controls his own destiny which in a sense makes man sovereign. In this worldview we don’t exist to glorify God (though lip service is sometimes given to this purpose); in reality we exist to be successful and comfortable in this life. We exist to have “Our best life now.” This man centered worldview affects how we view everything. Here are some examples:

- > Creation was meant for us to have a beautiful place to live until we go to heaven.
- > Prayer is the means we get from God that will allow us to fulfill our goals and make us successful.
- > Suffering is to teach us to pray with faith because if we have adequate faith, we don’t have to suffer.
- > Sin is bad because it robs us of the favor of God that He would pour out on us if we would just stop sinning.
- > Salvation is so that we can have our sins forgiven and have God’s favor here and thus success and prosperity.
- > Evangelism is our attempt to get people (by whatever means are necessary) to ask Christ into their life so that they will have a better life here and heaven when they die.

- > The purpose of missions is to help people in other cultures have the same successful and comfortable life that we have and then go to heaven when they die.

Do you see that while there are a few elements of truth here, who is at the center of it all? Man is at the center and God exists for us.

B. A God Centered Worldview – *Sola Deo Gloria*

In short, a God centered worldview is the worldview taught in the Scriptures. This worldview says that God is the center of all things. God does not exist for man; man (as well as everything else that exists) exists for God and for His glory. Let's look at the same examples we looked at in speaking of the man centered worldview:

- > Creation has the primary function of glorifying God. Psalms 19:1: “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” Yes, God was gracious to provide for us a beautiful place to live, but if that was His root purpose, why did He make it so immense? Creation is not a statement about man and his needs; creation is a statement about God and His glory.
- > Prayer is all about God and His glory. Prayer is not our telling God what we want Him to do; prayer is one of the means God has chosen to see His will in heaven done on earth. In prayer, I seek Him for His will and then pray in faith that His will in heaven will be done on earth. My goal in prayer is not my success or my being comfortable; my goal is to glorify Him by seeing His will done on earth as it is in heaven. John 14:13: “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
- > Suffering is an opportunity to glorify God either by displaying His enabling grace as I suffer and yet have a supernatural peace, or by displaying His power as He heals me or delivers me from an uncomfortable situation. Suffering is a unique opportunity to put God’s attributes on display. 1 Peter 5:10-11: “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Notice that it doesn’t say “deliver us out of our suffering”; it says that He will perfect (complete), confirm (ground you), strengthen, and establish (support) you.
- > Sin is not primarily about how it robs *us*; sin is about how it robs *God* of His glory. In fact, until we see our sin as being against God, we have not truly repented. We defined sin a few weeks ago as being “cosmic treason against God.” [R. C. Sproul] It is not simply something that hinders us from having our best life now.
- > Salvation is primarily about God and His glory. Ephesians 2 speaks of God’s love, mercy, and grace in saving us and then says in Ephesians 2:7 (HCSB): “so that in the coming ages He might *display* the immeasurable riches of His grace in [His] kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” It’s not about us; it is about his glory. Our salvation is primarily to put on display the glory of God.
- > Evangelism is not about our talking anyone into anything, it is not about how psychologically sound we present the plan of salvation. Evangelism is all about the power of God through the Gospel as He gives life to those who were dead. We have absolutely nothing to boast about in our own salvation or in leading others to Christ. In evangelism, we are simply a part of the means to God’s end of saving those He has done an awakening and drawing work in.
- > Missions is not primarily about the lost in other cultures and their need; it is about God and the fact that He is worthy of their worship and He is not receiving it. The goal of missions is to see rebels become worshippers because God is worthy. *Sola Deo Gloria!*

Conclusion

I hope that you see that this series has been way more than a history lesson. The needs of those in the 16th century are the same basic needs of this 21st century. When we forget the fact that it is really all about Him, we begin to adopt the world's values and then the world's ways. We need a reformation.

Allow me to close this message by asking you a sobering question. For me, this is the most convicting question I have ever been asked. *Is God to you a means or an end?* Do you see Him as the means to your happiness, success, comfort, self-esteem, etc.? If so you have a warped view of your reason for existing. If God and His glory is to you an end – that is everything is about pleasing Him, knowing Him more deeply and intimately, and making Him known that more and more people give Him the worship that He is due, then you have found the true purpose of your existence and the byproduct of that is that you will enjoy Him forever.