



Developed and Taught by Mark Dattoli

APPENDIX 1

◀ Why We Believe What We Do Believe ▶

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◀65▶ Do the Written Scriptures Support the 5 Solas of the Reformation?

The five solas of the Reformation distinguished the Protestant Reformers from the teachings of Rome. One summary of the 5 *Solas* (*Sola* is Latin for *Alone*) is:

Based on Scripture Alone, we believe that man is saved by Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Alone, all to the Glory of God Alone.

Since Protestants base their church on a foundation of *Sola Scriptura*—*the Bible Alone*, a fair question is: “Are the 5 *Solas* a completely biblical idea?” In this article we will show that they are, by listing out some specific Bible passages that fully justify each one of them (passages from the ESV translation).

▶ Scripture Alone (*sola scriptura*)

1 Corinthians 4:6. Learn by us not to go beyond what is written.

Deuteronomy 4:2. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Deuteronomy 12:32. Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6. Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Revelation 22:18-19. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

From the book *Roman Catholicism* by John Armstrong (Moody Press):

Scripture describes itself as:

being pure, perfect, eternal, sure, truth, forever settled in heaven; it sanctifies, causes spiritual growth, is God-breathed, authoritative, it gives wisdom unto salvation, makes wise the simple, is living and active, is a guide, a fire, a hammer, a seed, the sword of the Spirit; it gives knowledge of God, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path, produces reverence for God, heals, makes free, illuminates, produces faith, regenerates, converts the soul, brings conviction of sin, restrains from sin, is spiritual food, is infallible, inerrant, irrevocable, searches the heart and mind, produces life, defeats Satan, proves truth, refutes error, is holy, equips for every good work, is the final judge of all tradition, is the Word of God.

We are not told any of these things about tradition.

► Grace Alone (sola gratia)

Rom 6:23. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph 2:8-9. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

John 1:12. To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Rom 11:6. It is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

► Faith Alone (sola fide)

Galatians 5:4. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Galatians 2:16. yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:11. Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Rom 3:28. A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Titus 3:5. He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Rom 4:5. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Gal 2:21. If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.

Galatians (All). Note that the whole book of Galatians was written to make clear unless you trust completely—solely—in Christ, a half-hearted belief in Christ will not save you. Knowing the truth about Christ, and even trying to obey the law, will be of “no effect,” “no advantage” to you, if you are doing anything to help earn your salvation (verse 5:2).

► Christ Alone (solus Christus)

1 Timothy 2:5. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

John 3:16. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 16:30-31. "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

John 6:40. Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.

Hebrews 7:22-25. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

1 Peter 2:9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Hebrews (All). The whole book of Hebrews is all about the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, our high priest, meaning that we no longer need human priests, and a system of sacraments to find favor with God. Verse 4:16 says: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Because we have direct access to the Father, and Christ is sole mediator between God and man, we do not need priests to intervene. In fact, all Christians serve as priests to one another.

► To the Glory of God Alone (soli Deo gloria)

Isaiah 42:8. I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.

Revelation 5:12. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Revelation 7:12. "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

1 Corinthians 1:31. It is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Jeremiah 9:24. Let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.

See also this webpage ► [185 Verses on Faith Alone in Christ Alone](https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/miscellaneous/185-verses-faith-alone-in-christ-alone/)

redeeminggod.com/sermons/miscellaneous/185-verses-faith-alone-in-christ-alone/

◀66▶ The Five Solas

By Matthew Barrett, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-five-solas/>

DEFINITION

The five solas of the Reformation, which distinguished the Reformers from the teachings of Rome, include sola scriptura (Scripture alone), solus Christus (Christ alone), sola fide (faith alone), sola gratia (grace alone), and soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone).

SUMMARY

These five statements of the evangelical faith lay at the center of what distinguished the theology of the Reformation from the theology of the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century.

- Sola scriptura is the belief that because Scripture is God’s inspired Word, it is the only inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church.
- Solus Christus is the assertion that Christ alone is the basis on which the ungodly are justified in God’s sight.
- Sola fide maintains that the believer receives the redemption Christ has accomplished only through faith.
- Sola gratia proclaims that all of our salvation, from beginning to end, is by grace and grace alone.
- Because of these things, the Reformers held fast to the phrase soli Deo gloria, that only God receives glory for our salvation.

The five solas form the nucleus of the evangelical faith. They not only capture the gospel of Jesus Christ and explain how that gospel takes root in the sinner, but they also define where the authority of that gospel resides and to what end that gospel is preached and proclaimed. Although the phrase “five solas” may be more recent in its usage, the concepts are rooted in the 16th century Reformation. These five solas distinguished Reformers like Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, and so many others from the teachings of Rome. But at the heart of this divide was not merely a theological dispute, but a celebration of the gospel itself. The reformers were willing to lay their lives down for these solas first and foremost because they believed the gospel itself was at stake.

Sola Scriptura

Sola scriptura, sometimes referred to as the formal principle of the Reformation, is the belief that “only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church”. Notice, the basis of sola scriptura is Scripture’s inspired nature. As Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed-out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). That cannot be said of church tradition, councils, or church leaders, as important as they all may be. While Scripture may have many human authors, it has one divine author. The Holy Spirit, Peter tells us, carried along the biblical authors so that what they said, God himself said (2 Pet. 1:21), down to the very words.

For that reason, Scripture is also inerrant, inerrancy being a corollary of inspiration. Inerrancy means that Scripture is true, without error, in all that it asserts. As the Holy Spirit carried along the biblical

authors, he ensured that their human words reflected his own holy character. Hence Scripture is truth because God himself is truth. It is, after all, God's Word. Inerrancy is essential not only because it provides warrant for our assurance, giving us every reason to believe Scripture is trustworthy, but inerrancy also distinguishes Scripture from all other fallible authorities. Scripture alone is our infallible, inerrant authority.

Last, sola scriptura means that only Scripture is our sufficient authority. Not only does Paul say all Scripture is God-breathed, but on that basis, Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Or as the Belgic Confession says so well, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein."

Sola Scriptura teaches us, in the end, that all other authorities in the Christian life serve underneath Scripture, while Scripture alone rules over other authorities, for it alone is God's inspired, inerrant, and sufficient word.

Solus Christus

Scripture, as the Christian's final authority, is a gift from God. It is a gift because in Scripture we are given Jesus Christ himself. God would have been perfectly just and holy to leave us in our sin and condemnation. But our great God stooped down so low as to speak a saving word to us lost sinners, a word that reached its pinnacle in the living Word, the Lord Jesus himself (John 1:1).

Our temptation is to think, however, that there is something in ourselves, even in the slightest, that can contribute to our redemption. Perhaps it's obedience to the law, or perhaps it's good works that spring from faith itself. But Scripture counters: "None is righteous, no, not one" (Rom 3:10). God and God alone can save us.

The Father has done just that by sending his Son to "become flesh" (John 1:14) to represent us, substituting himself on our behalf. Whereas we failed to keep the law, Christ obeyed the law for us; whereas we deserve the penalty for breaking the law, Christ died for us. Christ fulfilled the law we could not keep, and he bore the wrath of God that we deserve (Rom. 3:21–26). And he did so in full. As that old hymn says, "Jesus paid it all." That means, then, that the work of Christ, and Christ alone, is the basis on which the ungodly are justified in God's sight.

Sola Fide

But how does the believer receive the redemption Christ has accomplished? Through faith and faith alone. Rather than trusting in ourselves, we trust in another: Jesus Christ.

The Reformers loved to talk about a "great, marvelous exchange." Christ has taken our sin and its penalty on the cross. What have we received in exchange? The perfect, spotless, righteousness of Christ. Not only have we been forgiven, and our debt been paid in full but imputed to our account is Christ's perfect record of obedience.

That means, then, that God declares us right with him not on the basis of something in us but only on the basis of an alien righteousness, a righteousness that is *extra nos*, outside ourselves. Of course, it is none other than the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Faith, then, is the instrument through which we receive this alien righteousness. Through faith in Christ that blessed status in Christ, which God alone can give, is reckoned to us. Hence Paul warns Christians that no one will be justified by works of the law but only through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:15–3:14).

Sola Gratia

If the work of Christ is the basis of our right standing before God, and if we are justified by God not on the basis of our works but only through faith in the works of his Son, then it follows that our salvation is by grace and by grace alone.

Sola gratia, however, is not limited to our justification, but spans all of salvation from start to finish. In fact, the grace that saves us is, as John Newton so famously sung, “amazing,” because it does not originate with us at all but stems from God’s mercy in eternity. As Paul says, God “chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4).

“But wait a minute,” you might say, “Surely my will and my choice must be the determining factor.” Not according to Paul: God’s election “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16) His choice, in short, is not conditioned on us; that would give us reason to boast. Rather, his electing grace is unconditional.

And if his grace in eternity is so free, then so too must his grace be unconditional when applied by the Holy Spirit. The God who has chosen us by grace alone, is the one who alone can call us out of darkness into the light of his own Son (effectual calling; John 6) and raise us from spiritual death to spiritual life (regeneration; John 3). His grace is not *synergistic*, as if it depends on our will for its success. No, it is *monergistic*, for he alone works to bring us dead, lifeless sinners to new life in his Son. Moreover, he alone can grant us the faith that believes and work such belief within us so that we embrace Christ as our Savior and Lord (Acts 13:48–50; Eph. 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29–30; 2 Pet. 1:1).

Soli Deo Gloria

Only if our salvation is by grace alone will God alone receive all the glory. If there is something of our own that we can claim, then we no longer boast in Christ alone. But if he is the author and finisher of our salvation then he alone is to be magnified for his sovereign grace. As Christians, these solas should cultivate an attitude of total humility. Whether it is in our secular vocations or our praise on a Sunday morning, to God alone be the glory.

1. Sola Gratia (Grace alone)

Salvation is the free gift of God to man. It is given by God's Grace alone and not through any merit on the part of the Christian.

GRACE = God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV).

The importance of this doctrine in Protestant theology was underlined by Martin Luther, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians:

"If the Pope would concede that God alone by His grace through Christ justifies sinners, we would carry him in our arms, we would kiss his feet."

2. Sola Fide (Faith alone)

We are judged righteous in the sight of God purely on the basis of our faith. The atoning sacrifice of Christ leads to righteousness being imputed to us as sinners through a legal declaration by God. This is often stated as *Justification by faith alone*. There is a clear distinction between *Justification* and *Sanctification*, the latter being the growth in holiness arising from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.

FAITH = Forsaking All I Trust Him.

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith." Galatians 3:11 (KJV).

Commenting on Justification in his writings, Martin Luther argued that:

"This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification, is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness."

3. Solus Christus (Christ alone)

Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and our salvation is accomplished only through His death and resurrection.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" 1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV).

In addition, every believer is a priest before God, with immediate access to him for the forgiveness of sins. This is known as the doctrine of the *Priesthood of all believers*. It was classically articulated by Martin Luther, but Protestants point to 1 Peter 2:9 as evidence of support for the doctrine:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9 (KJV).

The doctrine is not unique to Protestantism, being also found in the Roman Catholic Church, for example, but Protestants insist that no other special form of Priesthood is necessary, as opposed to the Catholic view of a ministerial priesthood being required for the administration of the Sacraments and forgiveness of sins.

4. Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone)

Scripture alone is the only infallible source of divine revelation and the final authority for matters of faith and practice. Sola Scriptura does not mean that all truth is contained in the Bible (for example the Nicene Creed is widely accepted and recited within orthodox Christianity), but rather that all mankind needs to know for salvation is contained within its pages.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV).

From the Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 4:17)

“For concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures.”

Protestants typically argue that scripture is *perspicuous* or clear to all people regarding the essential truths of the Christian gospel of salvation. In contrast to the Roman Catholic view of a Magisterium (or teaching office) of the church, which is required to infallibly interpret scripture, Protestants argue that through the Holy Spirit, individuals can, by themselves interpret the scriptures responsibly.

5. Soli Deo Gloria (To the glory of God alone)

Every aspect of the Christian life is to be seen as giving glory to God. In essence, this summarizes the other four Soli above. It also stemmed from the reformers opposition to what they perceived as the unwarranted glorification of the Popes and other clergy.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:11 (KJV).



Chapter 12: Recovering Personal Christianity

Book: The Catholic Mystery, by Author: John Armstrong, 1999

My assumption all through this book has been that evangelical faith in Christ is in accord with the teaching of the Scriptures. It is, in a word, orthodox. In this final chapter I will try to show why true, biblical, historic evangelical Christianity is faithful to the principles of Scripture and, as a result, why evangelicals must still stand outside the Church of Rome.

If we are to remain faithful to the Scriptures and to the Lord Jesus Christ, we must “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3 NASB). If we will not stand where the church has courageously stood before and if we will not properly defend the faith, we will ultimately give away our greatest treasure—the authority of the Word of God. I am not suggesting that we do this intentionally. But if we do not speak with the clearest voice where the faith is under attack, we will run from the battle and ultimately lose the heritage given to us by faithful teachers.

If we lose our grip on Scripture, we will also lose our grip on the gospel. This message is our power. It defines us as those who affirm the evangel. This means that we believe people are made right with God through Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. If we fail to understand and teach these Reformation truths, we stand to lose more than any of us can imagine.

These great principles were at the center of the debate in the sixteenth century. They must still be at the center of consistent evangelical faith and practice. They must be recovered once again and not simply by scholars. An army of ordinary believers needs to search the Scriptures afresh and understand that these are grand biblical truths that are worth defending and worth teaching to our children. The present-day disunity and confusion reveals our great loss. We have drifted far away from the truth. And as a result, we are charting uncertain and difficult waters.

FOUR DISTINGUISHED SOLAS

As we saw in chapter 3, the Protestant Reformation of nearly 500 years ago was fundamentally about theology. It was not simply a movement to purge the church of abusive practices, such as the sale of indulgences. Nor was it about claims to spiritual power associated with relics and visits to shrines. In this chapter we want to understand what the primary theological concerns of the Reformers were and why they insisted that these concerns clearly framed their theological position.

Because Latin was still the language of the academy in the sixteenth century, the arguments of the Reformers were often framed in that language. That is why you still hear slogans with names such as *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. What exactly were these four solas, and what does each mean?

1. Sola Gratia. This expression refers to grace alone, or, literally, solely by grace. Simply put, God’s saving activity is outside of the human sinner. It is focused in the person of Jesus Christ, and the sole ground of His saving work is grace. Grace plus nothing saves the sinner. The grace that saves is given solely because of God’s initiative, since nothing in people prompts God to save undeserving rebels.

2. Solus Christus. Christ’s doing and dying on our behalf is the sole basis of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God. Even our fellowship with God must be Christ centered. The Holy Spirit’s

ministry is primarily to glorify Christ and to make Him known. Christ is the beginning and end of Christian faith and Christian experience.

3. Sola Fide. The Holy Spirit's gift of faith and repentance to the sinner comes through the hearing of a historical, objective gospel message and is received through faith alone. This means that Christ's substitutionary life and death is imputed to us for justification unto eternal life. The justified sinner receives the Holy Spirit through faith in the gospel, and the one justified will glory only in Christ's cross, making God's saving action in Christ the central affirmation of Christian witness. He will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things revealed in Scripture through continual repentance. But his glory will never be in the feeble efforts of his own life or in the Spirit's presence within him. The Spirit within will lead him to look outward to Christ in every way.

4. Sola Scriptura. The Bible and the Bible alone is the Christian's infallible rule (canon) for all faith and practice. It alone is sufficient to establish the believer in the truth, and it alone will determine what he must believe as truth and what he must reject. It is sufficient to accomplish the work of the Spirit in leading us into all righteousness. Its central message, namely, salvation in Christ, is plain for all to see when it is approached in faith. No creeds, councils, or human leaders can act properly in matters of faith and practice except by doing so under the final authority of the written Scriptures.

These, in simple form, are the four great theological pillars of the Reformation. Much more can and should be said, but for now you need to understand that it is for these great truths that evangelicals contend today when they insist on simple loyalty to the Word of God.

GRACE ALONE

Martin Luther did not rediscover the theology of grace. What he rediscovered were the Pauline texts regarding its true meaning. And theologians since Luther have not manufactured a "straw man" for the purpose of an ongoing debate. A proper understanding of grace is ultimately at the heart of every theological error regarding the nature of salvation. Either we have a religion that saves solely on the basis of God's grace, or we have a religion in which we somehow share in saving ourselves. The popular version of self-help religion in America can be heard in the oft-quoted statement (of Benjamin Franklin) that "God helps those who help themselves!" Our part may seem quite small to us. It may even be our decision or our human will that made the real difference. In the end, any system of doctrine that attributes anything to human beings regarding salvation challenges the sovereignty of God's free grace.

Medieval theologians wrote and spoke frequently of grace. What it meant for them was this: Grace was something that God put within a human being so that he could cooperate with God, receiving the divine help that was needed to be justified before a holy God. Even Augustine, the greatest theologian of grace in the early church, was slightly off on this crucial point, thinking of grace as something God deposited within the human soul.

As a good and conscientious Augustinian monk, Luther longed to be acceptable and pleasing to God. His problem was not simply an overworked conscience. He fervently believed that God was radically holy. He believed that God's law was perfect. He believed he had been given grace in his baptism and that he was continually given grace in the sacraments. He even believed that he needed to trust Christ as his Savior. His problem was simple—being a good medieval theologian, he believed that if he could

apprehend enough of the inward grace of the Spirit in his own soul he might eventually become righteous before God. But the more he looked inward, the more he saw darkness and sin. He was devastated. All he could hope for was God's judgment, which should justly cast him into perdition.

Modern readers often find Luther's vexed soul disturbing. The reason for this is that our own view of sin is too slight. We are not truly aware of how far we have fallen from the law of God. We are prone to think that God owes us something because we are not really that bad. If God will give us a bit of help we can cooperate, and all will then be well. Luther knew better because he knew the human heart by the revelation of the Spirit to his own heart.

On reading Paul's letter to the Romans Luther discovered that it was only grace that made a sinner right with God. This grace was totally different from an inward endowment. Paul declared that sinners are "justified freely by his grace" (3:24) and added, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (verse 28). Later, he said, "To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (4:5).

Where Paul says in Romans 3:24 that we are "justified freely by his grace," some versions correctly say, "justified as a gift." The word for "gift" here means, simply, "without cause." God accepts the sinner quite apart from anything within him. Justifying grace is God's attitude of mercy and favor to lost, undeserving, rebellious sinners. Grace is not to be found in the heart of a person. It is in God's heart alone! Even when true believers reflect grace in their actions, they do so only as a result of this grace that is in God's heart. This is the perspective of grace alone.

If any single insight distinguishes Luther as the father of the Reformation movement, it is this. Reformers who preceded Luther, such as Wycliffe and Hus, saw many truths clearly but still lacked this Pauline perspective: Grace means being totally accepted by God in spite of being totally unacceptable in one's self!

But doesn't this mean that we can sin with boldness, or without consequence? That is the question Luther's opponents posed when he stated this great truth. But we don't need to turn to Luther to find an answer since Paul's critics responded to him in the same manner when he stated this same truth to the Romans. After presenting the doctrine of grace for several chapters, Paul wrote, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (Romans 6:1). His answer is a simple Greek construction, in Romans 6:2, that literally says, "God forbid."

When we understand grace properly, it will raise the identical question for us. If this question never occurs to us, then we have not yet understood or preached grace biblically. It is just that simple.

And when we understand grace in this proper way, we will no longer see it as merely necessary. It will be seen as the singular sufficient cause of salvation, without which we would have no hope whatsoever. We will understand that we were born into this world spiritually dead and therefore are completely unable to cooperate with the work of God's grace (even by the Holy Spirit) unless, and until, God is pleased to give us true life (see John 3:3-5; Ephesians 1:11; 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7).

CHRIST ALONE

The Reformers were quite concerned that grace, improperly understood, could be used as an excuse for sin. The idea that grace springs from a kind of easygoing grandfatherly God who overlooks shortcomings and Failures with sweet benevolence was unknown to the theologians of the Reformation. To Luther, for example, God was a sin-hating majestic being who was terrible in His holiness. He was able to cast both body and soul into hell. Grace, therefore, was not an act wherein God winked at sin and passed by it in simple kindness. Wrote Luther,

Were this view true, the entire New Testament would really be vain and futile, and Christ would have labored foolishly and uselessly in suffering for sin. God Himself would have practiced jugglery and humbug without any need, because He might well have forgiven and not imputed sins without the suffering of Christ. . . . Although out of pure grace God does not impute our sins to us, He nonetheless did not want to do this until complete and ample satisfaction of His law and His righteousness had been made. . . . God ordained for us, in our stead, One who took upon Himself all the punishment which we had deserved and fulfilled the Law for us; thus He averted the judgment of God from us and appeased His wrath. Grace...was purchased with an incalculable, an infinite treasure: the Son of God Himself. Therefore, it is. . . impossible to obtain grace except through Him alone.

As the apostle John wrote, “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Paul set this truth before us when he said that we are justified not only by His grace but also “by His blood” (Romans 5:9 NASB).

One of the major points to be made about Christ’s life and death as the sole basis for our salvation is that this view takes seriously the law and justice of God. No one can be justified unless the law is perfectly fulfilled. The death of Christ upholds the inviolability of the law. It magnifies God’s justice fully. The law must be kept for us to be justly saved. And Christ kept the law fully and paid for all its demands on behalf of those who violate it. He redeems those who by grace put their faith in Himself.

It is here that the dangerous tendency to antinomianism (“against the law”) is properly checked in the experience of true believers. We have come to Christ alone. In Him we are redeemed, and by Him we are kept by the Holy Spirit in grace. Faith will not turn to sin as a way of life because Christ has become our life.

If our salvation is accomplished entirely by the mediation of Christ in human history, then His perfect life and substitutionary atoning death alone are able to save us. When faith becomes secularized the person of Christ becomes increasingly associated with the popular whims of the culture. In such an environment a substitution of wholeness for holiness takes place. And feelings are substituted for informed and vital faith. What is needed is to put Christ back in the center of our vision so that He is genuinely preeminent in our lives.

FAITH ALONE

Even though justification and reconciliation are solely by grace alone and through Christ alone, not all sinners are justified and redeemed. Only those who take the warnings of the Savior seriously and look to Him will be saved.

Luther stated this well when he wrote, “Although the work of redemption itself has been accomplished, it still cannot help and benefit a man unless he believes it and experiences its saving power in his heart.” There are two very important things we must note about the faith that brings the believing sinner to grace.

First, faith is not magic. There is no saving virtue in faith as faith. Faith does not make one right with God; it merely receives the gift that makes one right with God. It does not bring grace into existence; it becomes conscious (by the Holy Spirit) of something already there. It is, as one person put it, like opening your eyes to see the sun that was always there before you ever saw it. Opening your eyes does not make the sun shine. Believing does not magically make you a Christian.

Second, faith is not an attribute of the natural human heart. Rather, it is a gift God gives to us. He gives this gift to us through the preaching of the gospel and by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Ephesian congregation, saying, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We must understand what faith is if we are to grasp this fundamental principle. Faith, biblically, is a noun that corresponds to the verb that means “to believe.” Faith is the biblical term consistently used to explain the relationship into which the gospel calls people a covenantal relationship of trust in God through Christ. Faith involves right belief about God. Thus, orthodoxy is a fundamental part of true faith (see Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:11; and 1 Peter 1:22), but it is more than orthodoxy, for it brings us, by the Spirit, into living and abiding in Christ as our personal Savior.

Faith, furthermore, rests on divine testimony. Writes theologian James I. Packer, “The Bible views faith’s convictions as certainties and equates them with knowledge (1 John 3:2; 5:18-20), not because they spring from supposedly self-authenticating mystical experience, but because they rest on the testimony of a God who ‘cannot lie’ (Titus 1:2) and is therefore utterly trustworthy. “ But faith that truly rests upon Christ alone, and the grace of God alone, is a supernatural gift. Sin and Satan have blinded us. We cannot “see” unless God gives us light (John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:18), and we cannot “come” to trust Christ until the Holy Spirit has worked within us, giving us both the sight and the desire and will to come.

This must be stated very plainly: *Faith does not save*. A host of present-day evangelicals carelessly, or perhaps foolishly, misunderstand this point when they say, “You will be saved by faith!” It is vital that we state this as Paul says it: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Please note the prepositions carefully: “by” grace and “through” faith.

Faith is resting, trusting, cleaving, and hoping. It is taking God’s promises for what they actually are. In regard to justification it is taking God’s declaration at face value: “To the man who does not work but

trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:5). Present faith in Christ secures present “eternal life” in full fellowship with God the Father through Christ alone (John 5:24; 17:3).

Many in our time do not understand or faithfully embrace this great truth. We have allowed sociological methods of church growth to undermine this essential truth. The sharp distinction between the church’s true biblical Word has been blurred by a marketing orientation that seeks to make the gospel more and more appealing to more and more people. In doing this we have denied the foolishness, or the offense, of the cross (see 1 Corinthians 1:18). We have also lost the power of the message in the process (see 2 Corinthians 2:1-5).

We must understand afresh that there is no gospel without the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to those who believe. Because He is the basis for our acceptance before God, patriotism, good works, and moral decency are not to be associated with the ministry of the gospel of Christ. Both evangelicals and Catholics alike need to understand that a commitment to moral reformation is not the same as a commitment to the gospel of a crucified Redeemer.

This doctrine of justification through faith alone is an offense. It troubles the proud. It directly challenges the “good, clean, righteous” person who supports the church faithfully. It offends the person who considers his experience of God to be adequate for salvation. It bothers the victorious people who often speak of their ecstasies of the Spirit and visions of the supernatural. But to all who have struggled mightily with God’s law and His holy character and have seen their own unrighteousness, this is the only hope they have—a merciful, good, gracious God giving to them solely on the basis of faith. This is based on the righteousness of Christ alone by grace alone. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

SCRIPTURE ALONE

The assurance that God had spoken in the past and that He still speaks through the Scriptures gave the Reformers incredible boldness in standing up to the grave errors they saw in the medieval church. As Luther said near the end of his life, in reference to the Reformation, “The Word did it all!”

The constant battle cry of the Reformation was, “Scripture alone!” This truth formed the whole cause of the Reformation. It sustained the recovery, and it drove forward every entrance of divine light that brought revival. It will do the same in your life and that of your church fellowship if the same principle is truly recovered today.

What was it that made this principle so powerful, and what exactly is meant by “Scripture alone”? The Roman Catholic Church had believed, even on the eve of the Reformation, in an infallible Bible. It accepted the same texts as the Reformers, at least until the Council of Trent, when the apocryphal books were formally recognized. What was new about the “Scripture alone” position of the Reformers?

The new element the Reformers brought to the church of their age was the conviction that Scripture can and does interpret itself to the faithful from within itself—Scripture is its own interpreter. The Christian does not need popes or councils to explain what Scripture really means. Scripture has a self-authenticating authority. Further, Scripture actually stands over papal and conciliar pronouncements,

showing them to be untrue when they go against the written Word. Scripture was both the only source and the only judge of what the church had said and should say in any age. If we want to speak with the Lord's authority, we must speak according to the Scriptures!

By the sixteenth century the authority of Scripture had been weakened in a number of ways. One way was that human traditions were exalted, and another way was that the truths of Scripture were communicated to the common people through the mediation of popes, councils, and priests. The Reformers, in stating the great principle "Scripture alone!" were setting forth the idea that God speaks to His people directly, finally, effectively, and authoritatively through His written Word.

This vital message is needed today more than ever. Whether the Catholic reader recognizes it or not, there still is singular power in the truth of Scripture. Until recently many Catholics never seriously read their Bibles. With the freedom of Vatican II "opening the window," this, thankfully, has changed in the last 30 years. Now Catholics attend Bible study groups with both fellow Catholics and evangelicals. They are finding out for themselves what I mean when I speak about Scripture's power to grip the heart directly when the Bible is read in faith. One does not need a human agent to see the glory of Christ revealed on the sacred pages of God's Word. One only needs the gift of God's Spirit, who is our Teacher (John 14:26), for which all should pray when they come to the infallible Scripture.

Too many evangelicals do not truly trust Scripture, either. In increasing numbers they are turning to what their favorite teacher says or to a popular bestselling book. For them Scripture has been separated from its authoritative function. It has become a marketing text, or even a book to be used in developing therapeutic techniques. They do not carefully search the Scriptures as the Bereans (Acts 17:11) of the New Testament era. Some evangelicals even add their own special set of

cultural and religious rules and rituals, including a list that is tailored to each special area of the country.

Many evangelical pastors neglect Scripture's primary place in their instruction by introducing one fad after another into their ministry. They adapt the message of the Bible to fit the "felt needs" of their hearers (consumers) or even allow precious doctrinal truths to lose their salient force for good by emptying the true authority of the Bible in the way that they handle it week by week. What we all need is a great recovery of faith found by looking to Scripture alone.

There is much talk in our time about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, among both Catholics and evangelicals. Indeed, this talk and emphasis has done much to bring us together. But we must understand afresh that the work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience can never be separated from the written Scriptures. The Spirit does not speak clearly except through the Word of God. Apart from the written Word we would never know or understand the grace of God. This is the test of truth, period!

But did the sixteenth-century Reformers understand the Bible to be their only authority? Absolutely not! They appealed to history, science, logic, church fathers, councils, creeds, confessions, and careful studies of the Greek and Hebrew texts. But what they did say was that there is only one ultimate, final authority—the Bible alone.

When the early church convened its first council to decide upon matters that threatened its own unity, the appeal was not to human authority. Its appeal was not to Rome, to one of the apostles, or to some higher human court. The appeal in Acts 15 was to “the words of the prophets,” which are said to “agree” regarding God’s acceptance of the Gentiles into the visible church on the same ground of grace as the Jews (verses 12-18).

Thirty-three times the writers of the New Testament say, “As it is written. . . .” A most important example is to be found in regard to the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Romans 1:17, where we read, “In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last; just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Here Paul grounds his entire doctrine of justification by faith in the words of the prophet Habakkuk. Don’t miss this point: Faith alone, in other words, is grounded in Scripture alone. Paul appeals to the authority of Scripture repeatedly in Romans (see, for example, 4:3; 10:11).

A particularly common phrase that indicates the same principle is found in Luke 24:44~47, where we read of Christ being written about “in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (verse 44). When Jesus began to teach His disciples about all that He was and all that He had done for their redemption, He “opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (verse 45). And in verse 46 He said to them, “This is what is written. . . .” If you read the New Testament looking for an appeal by Jesus or the apostles to tradition, creeds, councils, or church authority, you will look in vain. In fact, such an appeal is condemned several times in the Scriptures (see Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:1-9; and Colossians 2:8).

In the sixteenth century, the practice of exalting human traditions to a place above the Word of God had weakened the authority of the Scriptures. The same problem exists in a myriad of ways in the modern church, Catholic and Protestant. The formative principle of the Reformation movement, and a major difference that still remains between Catholics and evangelicals today, is Scripture alone. This is true because the Scriptures—and the Scriptures only—speak directly, authoritatively, and powerfully to the people of God. That is why, whether you are Catholic or Protestant, Christian or non-Christian, the Spirit of God speaks powerfully to your life when you read the Word of God in faith, study it carefully in your home Bible study group, or hear it preached effectively.

A famous minister of the last century, when asked if he should defend the Bible, said, “Defend the Bible? Why, it is a lion! I would rather let it out. It can defend itself!” Scripture alone still says today, “Let the lion out! It is true authority, and it will be the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to bring people to the knowledge of true faith and holy practice.”

SUMMING UP

Historian J. H. Merle d'Aubigne wrote many years ago, "The only true reformation is that which emanates from the Word of God." Ultimately the greatest fruit of the evangelical recovery of the sixteenth century may very well be lost if we continue to turn away from the gospel and the Word of God.

Many important concerns face modern Christians. Our culture is collapsing. Values we hold dear in Western civilization are eroding. Secular intellectual barbarians are scaling our city's walls. Multitudes of concerned people are wringing their hands. Leaders are continually calling upon us to stem the tide. "Get involved," they urge us. "Do something if you really care. Join hands with the forces that oppose immorality and secular humanism in our society." At times it seems that Christianity has been turned into a massive coalition of uniquely nontheological ministries all aimed at "doing something" to rescue us before it is too late.

My greatest fear is not that we will lose Western culture, or even our great nation. My greatest fear is that we will lose the gospel. Evangelicals were given this great truth but they have no singular claim to it. This message is for all who will receive it, Catholic or evangelical. If we lose the gospel, the result will be a fallen church. We will have no real power. And we will have nothing with which to truly change the culture, one significant person at a time.

Most people today no longer understand the doctrine of Scripture alone; thus frequent attacks upon this precious truth no longer alarm us. Evangelicals undermine the doctrine of faith alone when we ignore the centrality of this truth and its importance. We do this as well when we enter into agreements that turn away from this distinctive truth. We do this when we continually build ministries on something other than Christ alone and grace alone.

Catholics do this too when they read their Bibles and then turn back to the Catholic mystery to settle the vital issues of repentance and faith. It is just too easy to solve the problems of the heart with answers received from human authorities. We all have this tendency; only God can break us of it.

But the answer is not far from any of us—evangelicals need to be evangelical again! And Catholics need to truly submit themselves to the magisterium of holy Scripture. Until we all recover our biblical heritage, turn to the Word of God afresh, and plead for His mercy to fall upon us, we will continue groping for a center of reference. We are like a weakened and powerless Samson, going round and round in circles without our eyes.

A few rays of hope are emerging as increasing numbers of Christians become aware of what the Reformation was *really* about. Many are beginning to see the significant doctrinal reasons for what actually took place. They are daring to dream of another reformation in our present-day generation. They are praying earnestly for a reformation that draws from the past yet looks to the future with hope. May God be pleased to light another blaze in the church that transforms our culture with amazing effect. And may He light that blaze in both evangelical and Catholic hearts.

This book has been written with two kinds of readers in mind. First, the evangelical who still believes that the Scriptures really are the infallible Word of the living God. To this reader I conclude by asking you to “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved” (2 Timothy 2:15) in every way possible. I urge you to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have a doctrinal and personal heritage in your faith and practice that you may know very little about. Learn more about it.

Seek to understand more what you believe and why you believe it. Keep a watchful eye on the events of our time that threaten to undermine the Reformation truths of sound evangelical religion. If you do not know what you believe and why you believe it, you will not be equipped for every good work, and you will be easily led astray.

It is my belief that evangelicalism is in trouble in the present age. Not because we are not large, nor because we are not active or vocal, but rather because we do not understand what it means to be truly evangelical. The tragic consequences of our weaknesses are becoming more apparent every day.

This book has also been written for Roman Catholic readers who wish to better understand the beliefs and practices of contemporary (that is, Vatican II) Roman Catholicism. My appeal to you is also personal.

Have you trusted Jesus Christ alone to save you from sin—both its enslaving power and its fatal consequences? Do you really know that if you died today God would accept you into His heaven? On what basis? If your answer in any way reveals that your hope is in the Catholic mystery (i.e., your hope is grounded in your baptism, your fellowship with the church, or the faith and intercession of others), you will not be saved. You must trust Christ and Him only.

Further, do you understand that unless you are saved by grace alone you cannot and will not be saved at all? God does not save you because of your human will or personal decision. He does not save you because you are a “good Catholic” (or a “good evangelical,” for that matter). He will save you solely on the basis of His grace, or you will not be saved.

Do you see that you have sinned? Few Catholics I have met deny this truth. Actually, Catholics sometimes understand this reality much better than evangelicals. But have you personally felt the weight of your sin? Has the law of God brought you to see your helpless, hopeless, and powerless condition before Him? If so, cast yourself upon His mercy and ask Him to save you.

Finally, do you understand that if grace comes to you in any way other than by faith alone, then you are sharing in the work of salvation? God will not share this work with you. Either He must save you based upon His free gift, or you will not be saved. If you contribute anything, even your faithful receiving of grace through the partaking of sacraments, then you are not trusting Him alone.

Ultimately you must obey the Word of God as the Holy Spirit speaks to your conscience. For this to happen you must know the teaching of the Scriptures. You must search the Scriptures earnestly that you may find the truth. You may well discover that there are far more conflicts between the plain

teaching of the Word of God and your Catholic tradition than you ever imagined. We have seen only a few of these in this book.

If you follow the Word of God it may cost you dearly. Jesus Himself taught:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.” Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:34-39).

But if you follow God, faithfully obeying His Word, you have everything to gain and ultimately nothing to lose, for Jesus also said, “Whoever acknowledges [or confesses] me before men, I will also acknowledge [confess] him before my Father in heaven” (verse 32).

7 Key Differences Between Protestant and Catholic Doctrine

From: voice.dts.edu/article/7-key-differences-between-protestant-and-catholic-doctrine-del-rosario-mikel/

According to a recent U.S. Religious Landscape Survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, there are about half [MD: actually *twice*] as many Catholics as Protestants in America today. But why do so many make this distinction? Don't both groups hold to essentials of the Christian faith, like the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus? What's the difference between what Protestants believe and what Catholics believe?

While both Protestants and Catholics agree on who Jesus is, there are seven key issues which continue to distinguish their beliefs and practices. In a new Table Podcast series, Dr. Darrell Bock, Dr. Scott Horrell, and Dr. Michael Svigel discuss important distinctives of both traditions. Here is a summary of the conversation:

1. The Magisterium

The term “magisterium” refers to the official teaching body of the Roman Catholic Church. Dr. Horrell explains,

“Usually, it's related to... the large house of cardinals and the leading theologians in the movement; but finally, that all comes under, of course, the pope himself.”

Besides providing a trusted, unified voice to guide Catholics, this body also allows the church to make official pronouncements on contemporary issues which Scripture might not directly address.

Although there is no equivalent to the magisterium for Protestants, it's possible to compare Catholic and Protestant views of the role of tradition.

2. Tradition

While Protestants don't view tradition as equal in authority with the Scriptures, the Roman Catholic Church has a different perspective—one which clearly distinguishes itself from Protestant churches. As Dr. Horrell notes:

“The issue of Sola Scriptura...versus ‘Scripture plus tradition’ is perhaps the fundamental difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism...(what) you're talking about it's a hermeneutic, a way of doing theology.”

While Protestants only view the Scriptures as authoritative, the Catholic Catechism clearly states that Church:

“...does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”

3. Salvation and Grace

Protestants often express the idea that salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. This assertion views justification as specific point upon which God declares that you are righteous—a point where you enter into the Christian life.

In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church views justification as a process, dependent on the grace you receive by participating in the Church—which is seen as a repository of saving grace. Dr. Svigel explains the Catholic perspective:

“Grace is treated almost as if it's a substance, something that can be dispensed through various avenues of change and means... You're saved by grace, but how you receive that grace and what that grace does and whether it's a one-time entrance into the Christian life or if it's a constant movement toward salvation—that's really the big difference between Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church.”

4. The Eucharist

When it comes to the Eucharist, which most Protestants call ‘The Lord’s Supper,’ or “Communion,” the Roman Catholic Church holds to the doctrine of transubstantiation—the idea that the edible ritual elements used during the mass literally become the body and blood of Christ. Dr. Svigel explains:

“At the moment that the priest says, ‘This is my body,’ the invisible, unperceivable essence that...you couldn't see (with) an electron microscope, (is) there in a miracle. It contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. And that becomes the spiritual and physical nourishment. As you partake of it, it becomes part of you, transforms you, and makes you more and more righteous.”

In contrast, some Protestants, like Lutherans, hold to perspective called consubstantiation, where Jesus’ body and blood are seen as coexisting with the bread and the wine. Martin Luther likened this to the idea of a red-hot iron in a fire—united, but not changed. Dr. Bock says:

“I like to call it ‘the over, under, around and through’ view. Jesus Christ surrounds the elements. He's spiritually present, but he's not in the elements themselves; the elements don't become the body and blood of Christ.”

Still, other Protestants hold to the memorial view—the idea that you're commemorating Jesus’ death. In this understanding, the elements are symbols which remain ontologically unaffected by the ritual.

5. Justification

As previously discussed, protestants view justification as the moment God declares that a guilty person is righteous because of what Christ has done. Sanctification, then, is the process of being made more righteous throughout your life.

However, Dr. Horrell notes that Catholics view justification as both a point and a process:

“What the Roman Catholic rejects is that there is an imputed righteousness of Christ to us at the moment of salvation, that we are counted as fully righteous in the sight of God”

6. Priesthood of All Believers

Rather than a vertical structure, Protestants see the church as having a horizontal structure. Dr. Svigel contrasts the role of the Catholic priest with the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all believers:

“That which was reserved just for the magisterium, the ability to bind and loose to forgive and withhold forgiveness through the sacraments and through penance and such, that was just the role of the priest. From Luther on, we have the ability to confess our sins to one another, pronounce forgiveness as the scripture says.”

7. Veneration of the Saints and the Virgin Mary

Roman Catholics see veneration, not as praying to the Saints and the Virgin Mary, but as praying through them. This is seen as similar to asking a brother or sister in Christ to pray for you. Dr. Svigel adds that departed saints are also “able to spill over their overabundance of grace to us.”

Furthermore, Dr. Horrell notes that the Virgin Mary is seen as “the mother of our Lord, and therefore she is the mother of his body, and his body is the church, so she is the mother of the church. He is the creator of all things. So she is the mother of angels. She is the mother of humanity, as is sometimes said.”

Moreover, the Catholic Church has also called her the Queen of Heaven. Historically, Mary was given a less prominent position in Protestantism as a reaction to this emphasis in the Catholic Church. There is no equivalent to this kind of veneration in Protestantism, as Protestants emphasize direct access to God.

