

# SOLI DEO GLORIA

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## *for The Reformation*

Sundays after Sundays, we go to church and hear a preacher preach a sermon. Have you ever wondered whether the preacher is often enjoying himself at the pulpit, or trembling in his lips and wishing that he is not being forced to preach? If you do wonder, go ask the preachers. 😊

Well, this month (October), we are remembering the Protestant Reformation, and the name “Martin Luther” comes to mind. So, we might also want to hear what Martin Luther once said about his aversion towards preaching:



*“I feared the pulpit perhaps as greatly as you do; yet I had to do it; I was forced to preach.... Ah, how I feared the pulpit! Under this pear tree I advanced fifteen arguments to Dr. Staupitz; with them I declined my call. But they did me no good.”*

Of course, Luther’s fear of the pulpit as a preacher was eventually overcome and he became a prolific preacher for decades.

To understand more of Martin Luther’s thinking, we can do more than remembering the famous 95 Theses that he nailed on a church door in Germany, setting off a no-turning-back tide of the Reformation. In a particular year (1528) alone, he preached about 200 sermons. Many of his sermons are now freely available online. By going through these sermons, we do not only

gain a better understanding of the man and his belief, but also gain a lot of valuable spiritual insight aligned with the Gospel Truth.

While there may be variances of theological opinions among denominational distinctives, both the Lutheran and Reformed branches of Protestantism uphold the same foundational principles of the five solas which Luther called the “doctrine by which the church stands or falls”:



- Sola Scriptura, by Scripture alone.
- Sola Gratia, by grace alone.
- Sola Fide, by faith alone.
- Solus Christus, through Christ alone.
- Soli Deo Gloria, glory to God alone.

### Sola scriptura



The Bible alone is the highest authority on truth. Although church tradition has its authority, this authority is still subordinate to the authority of Scriptures; viz., the 66 books in the Bible. (Ref. Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19)

John Wesley said, “The Church is to be judged by the Scriptures, not the Scriptures by the Church.”

John Chrysostom (304 – 407), a Christian bishop humbly said, “You have Scripture for a master instead of me; from there you can learn whatever you would know.”

## Sola gratia

Our salvation is effected by God's grace through Jesus Christ; not justified by human works which will always be inadequate due to our sinful nature. Our righteousness is not based on human merit but on the unmerited favour of our Lord Jesus Christ.



“Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.” – 1 Pet. 1:13

We can also “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” – Heb. 4:16

We reject what the Roman Church taught about righteousness being credited to us by both God’s grace and human virtue.

### Sola fide

The Augsburg Confession says, “It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God **by grace**, for Christ’s sake, **through faith**, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21–26 and 4:5.”

### Solus Christus

We discover from **Scripture alone** that we are justified by **grace alone** through **faith alone** because of **Christ alone**.

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.” – 1 Tim. 2:5-6

We should hold fast our confession that Christ alone is our only great high priest (Heb. 4:14), our Redeemer (Gal. 3:13), the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

Since our salvation is achieved wholly through the work of Christ, we reject the Roman Church's preaching on purgatory and prayers to saints.

### Soli Deo Gloria

Referencing Rev. 5:13 and 7:10, we can say, "To God alone be the glory!"

**Scripture** comes from God; **grace** is His unmerited favour of forgiveness to us; and even our **faith** is granted by Him to connect us to the Cross where our sin is propitiated by no one but **Christ** alone.

Our life is entirely under the sovereign rule of God. Is there need for any other reason to attribute all **glory to God?**

By acknowledging the theological principle of Soli Deo Gloria, we should be better placed to:

- disabuse ourselves of any inclination towards seeking self-esteem in our service;
- expound a clearer exegesis of the Gospel legacy of the Reformation vs. the Law under the Old Covenant.

*John Lee*