

Reformation Day

With Halloween just two days away - I've decided to present you with another reason to celebrate this Friday

With this as our focus - I want to take you back to a Dark and stormy night during the early 16th century...

...when a young man named Luder - was returning home after having visited his parents

All of a sudden, when a catholic named Luder - was caught in a terrible thunderstorm.

Lightening struck near him and he fell to the ground.

And at that moment, he vowed to his patron saint, St. Anne...

...that if his life should be spared he would become a monk.

Luder's life was spared - and so the young man became a monk.

For two years - he kept himself pure of earthly pleasures - and he starved himself of food...

...and it was there in the dark room of the Black Monastery in Erfurt...

...where he beat himself with a whip night after night attempting to please - and appease his God.

Eventually, Luder became a Catholic priest and served at a castle Church in Wittenburg Germany...

...that is - until one eerie Halloween evening in 1517 - when Luder sealed his fate...

...by nailing a document - which is now known as the 95 Thesis...

...to the door of the castle church - there in Wittenburg.

You might not know it - but - this actually marks the beginning of the Protestant reformation.

It's for this reason - that many Christians celebrate reformation day - on All Hallows Eve.

And with that being the case - I'd like to spend our time tonight...

...considering the 95 thesis - which ended up sparking the Protestant reformation.

Before we consider the details of this document - I should first point out that...

...Martin Luder - changed his surname to 'Luther', which some believe was based on a Greek word...

...which speaks of freedom and liberty.

It's also interesting to note that - it was in 1507 - when Martin Luther started a five-year rigorous study in Humanist ideology.

The ideology was founded in the Latin words '*Ad Fontes*,' which means '*Back to the Source!*'

In an attempt to get "Back to the Source" of the Christian Faith...

...Luther began to study the original Hebrew and Greek...

...so that he could study the Bible in the original languages.

He went on to receive his doctorate in Theology in 1512...

...and afterward -he became a professor at Wittenberg University, lecturing on Psalms, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

And after becoming a catholic priest at the castle church in Wittenberg...

...Luther began to recognize the church's obvious abuse of indulgences.

Just to be Clear - the indulgences of the Roman Catholic Church...

...were official documents - which were believed to excuse someone...

...from the guilt of specific sins - that they had committed.

And it was during the days of Luther - when the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church...

...were happy to sell these indulgences - to those who were attempting to buy their way into heaven.

This all began - back in the 11th century - when Pope Urban II awarded the complete pardon...

...from all acts of penance - to those who would go and conquer the Holy Land - for Rome.

Then - by the 16th Century - under Pope Leo X - the idea of indulgences was found in the popular proverb...

"As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs"

And in this way - the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church...

...were literally cashing in - on the sins of their parishioners.

By 1514 - Luther had observed - how many people in Wittenberg were no longer coming to him for confession.

And instead - They were going to nearby towns - in order to buy Indulgences - from those who sold them.

Having spent serious time studying the scriptures – Luther knew that this was not only an unbiblical practice...

...but - it was a form of licentiousness - which was leading people astray.

And it's for this reason - that he decided to protest the selling of indulgences....

...by posting the 95 Thesis - to the door of his church.

Now - I should first point out that - the 95 Thesis isn't completely correct - Biblically speaking.

So - we don't want to make the mistake - of thinking that Martin Luther - was infallible.

Luther was still very much a Catholic at heart - with an allegiance to the Pope - when he crafted this document.

At the same time – Luther's 95 Thesis became the spark - that ignited the fire...

...which would eventually result in the Protestant reformation.

Or - you might think about it like this - Halloween - marks the anniversary...

...of the day when Luther's - 95 Thesis - helped many - to escape the destructive heresies...

...which had been introduced over the years - by popes - and Roman Catholic mystics alike.

As a matter of fact - the 95 Thesis was the seed - from which sprang forth the great Protestant Reformers...

...like Calvin - Knox - Arminius - and Zwingli.

Luther's 95 thesis - also paved the way for groups like the Anabaptists and the Huguenots.

And when the smoke cleared – the Protestant leaders set out to define the 5 pillars of the reformation

These 5 pillars - are better known as the 5 Solas

Just to be clear - The Five Solas are found in five Latin phrases - which become the main points of our study tonight.

1. Sola-Scriptura – meaning – Scripture Alone

2. Solus-Christus – meaning – Christ alone

3. Sola-Gratia – meaning – Grace alone

4. Sola-Fide – meaning – Faith Alone

5. Soli-Deo Gloria – meaning – For the glory of God Alone

With this as our focus - Let's take some time to briefly look at each of the pillars of the protestant Church

Let's begin with - Sola-Scriptura - which means - Scripture Alone

Regarding "Sola-Scriptura," the Cambridge Declaration explains this pillar - in this way...

The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin AND is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

In order grasp the importance of this pillar – we should take a moment to consider the issue that arises...

...whenever we allow extra-biblical information - to influence the church.

Listen - if the Bible isn't our perfect plumb line - for determining what is true - then what is?

If the spiritually inspired word of God isn't our godly guideline – then what is?

If the Scriptures fail to provide us with the steady standard - that reveals God's perfect plan...

...then where should we look - for the doctrinal details...

...that define God's plan of salvation.

With these questions in mind - I should take a moment to point out that...

...the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church would lead us to believe that...

...the papacy can provide us with additional information - that isn't found in the Bible.

For example - it was in 593AD - when pope Gregory I - invented the doctrine of Purgatory

In 995AD – The Canonization of dead saints was introduced by Pope John 15th

In 1079 - The celibacy of the priesthood was decreed by Pope Hildebrand, Boniface 7th

In 1220 - The worship of the wafer was decreed by Pope Honorius

And in 1229 - The Bible was forbidden to laymen and placed in the Index of forbidden books by the Council of Valencia

That's right - the Bible became a forbidden book for believers According to that 13th century RCC council.

And if I had to guess why - - then - it was due to the fact that...

...there is nothing in the Bible about purgatory, celibacy, worshipping wafers and indulgences.

And so - they set out to stop their parishioners - from personal Bible study.

Instead - they encouraged their people - to trust in the Papal authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

Not only that - but — they also endorse the progressive revelation - of their Mystics

Just to be clear - the Catholic mystics were those who sought intimacy with God through suffering...

...whether it be through self flagellation - starvation - or Eastern Meditation.

For example - it was During the 12th Century – when a Roman Catholic Mystic - named ST. DOMINIC...

...received the Rosary from a spirit claiming to be the Virgin Mary.

In the 13th century – there was ST. SIMON STOCK

...who claims to've received the idea of the Brown Scapular from a spirit claiming to be the Virgin Mary...

...who allegedly promised immediate salvation - for those who die while wearing the scapular

In the 14th Century - there was ST. GERTRUDE the GREAT

...who claims to have received private revelations from Jesus regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart...

...and the importance of the Communion of Saints.

And Again in the 14th Century - CATHERINE OF SIENA...

...was blessed with the invisible stigmata and often lived on communion wafers - as her only source of food.

Oh yeah – and sometimes - she was tormented by visions which she believed to be demonic.

Rather than relying on the word of God - which has already been established in heaven...

...the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church rely upon the progressive revelation of popes - and mystics...
...as they introduce extra-biblical information - which is often times in conflict with the Bible.

Thankfully, Martin Luther helped to bring us back to the pillar of Biblical truth.

In his 95 Thesis, Martin Luther wrote...

“The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.”

Later, in 1539, in his commentary of the 119th Psalm, Luther wrote...

"In this psalm David always says that he will speak, think, talk, hear, read, day and night constantly—but about nothing else than **God's Word** and Commandments.”

Paul also presented us with a clear basis - for embracing Sola Scriptura — it's in 2nd Timothy 3 - where he declared...

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2Ti 3:17 that the man of God may be complete,
thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Christian - listen - we don't need the progressive
revelation of Popes - and Mystics.

The word of God is all we need to become complete
Christians...

...who are thoroughly equipped for every good
work

When Martin Luther was challenged to recant his position,
he responded,

“Unless I am convinced **by Scripture** and plain reason - I
do not accept the authority of the Popes and councils, for
they have contradicted each other - my conscience is
captive to **the Word of God**. I cannot and I will not recant
anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor
safe. God help me. Amen. ”

Simply put - every doctrine that we embrace - must be
established by the word of God...

...according to the first pillar of Protestantism -
better known as Sola-Scriptura.

Solus-Christus

This brings us to the second pillar of the Protestant reformation - -
which is based on the Latin phrase - Solus-Christus

Solus-Christus - which means - Christ Alone - is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is our only mediator.

And it's sad to say that - this belief was extremely contentious - back in the 16th Century

In order to understand why - let's continue to consider the theology...

...of the Roman Catholic Church.

It was the 13th century - at the Lateran Council - when Pope Innocent III....

...instituted the necessity of Roman Catholics - to Confess their sins to the priest - in order to receive forgiveness.

And From this doctrine - the Roman Catholic Church began to increase the power of their priesthood.

Now - think about this for a moment - why would God wait — until the 13th century...

...before He finally revealed that it was necessary - to confess your sins - to a priest?

Why did He wait until the 13th century to inform the church...

...that Roman Catholic priests - are the new mediators between God and man?

Without debate - this seems completely unreasonable

By the 16th century - the power allotted to the priests resulted in wide spread corruption.

And the corruption was too much for Martin Luther to bear.

It's for this reason that Martin Luther - in his 95 Thesis - instructed the people - by declaring...

“Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head...”

This lines up with something Paul wrote - in his 1st letter to Timothy - it's 1st Timothy chapter 2 - where he declared...

1 Tim 2:5 ...*there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus

There is only one Mediator - who has worked on our behalf.

There is only one Advocate - who has paid the price for our sins

And there is one intercessor who daily intercedes on our behalf.

Yahshua Hamashiach – Jesus our Messiah

It's in Hebrews chapter 7 - where Paul presented us with the doctrine of Solus-Christus - by declaring...

Heb 7:23 there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.

Heb 7:24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Heb 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Heb 7:26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

Heb 7:27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

We no longer need priests to daily offer up the sacrifice of the mass...

...and the reason why is because - Christ alone already accomplished this once for all...

...when He offered up Himself on the cross

Sola-Fide

To sum up the first two pillars - - it's From Scripture alone - that we learn that — Christ alone — is all we need for the forgiveness of sins.

This brings us to the third Pillar of the Protestant reformation - - which - in Latin - is stated as - Sola-Fide

Simply put - Sola-Fide means Faith Alone — and the reason for why this pillar is so important...

...is due to the fact that - the Roman Catholic Church teaches - faith - plus works.

Since the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church - which technically began in the 4th Century...

...until the time of Martin Luther - - various popes had introduced a number of requirements - necessary to acquire salvation

By the 11th century - Roman Catholics were obligated to attend the Mass if they wanted to enter the pearly gates.

And by the 15th century, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church...

...required their parishioners - to earn the grace of God - through their 7 sacraments.

And still - even today - the sacramental system - is necessary...

...for the members of the Roman Catholic Church.

After spending time studying the scriptures — Martin Luther realized that - - we aren't saved by our works.

He was sitting alone in his study at Wittenberg, thinking as he did so often of God's terrible justice.

His Bible lay open before him and his eyes fell on a passage from Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

It's there in Romans chapter 1 - Verse 17 where Paul declared...

"...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

As he read the passage, he realized that - all of his fasting and penance counted for nothing...

...and that the only thing that would save him - was a simple faith in Jesus.

And from this revelation – the reformers began to preach...

...that salvation is not a result of Baptism
Nor is it acquired through sacraments...

...no instead - forgiveness is received
by faith - and faith alone.

Sadly - it was 1520 when Pope Leo X decided to excommunicate Martin Luther...

...but not before proclaiming an anathema against him -
which is a formal ecclesiastical curse.

Then - in 1545 - the Roman Catholic Church doubled-down on their heresy - at the Council of Trent - with these 2 statements...

According to the 9th canon of that Council - we learn that...

"If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified... let him be anathema"

And according to the 14th canon of that Council - we also learn that....

"If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified...(and that) by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema."

In light of these statements - we should take a moment to ask - was Luther right - - or was he accursed?

Is Sola-fide an unbiblical heresy - - or - are the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church...

...guilty of creating a false gospel - which is no gospel at all?

In order to answer this this question - let's consider a few verses from the Holy scriptures.

Lets consider what Jesus said - in John chapter 3 - where He declared...

John 3:14 ...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
John 3:15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

According Jesus - those who BELIEVE in Him - are saved - by faith.

Paul confirmed this - in Galatians chapter 3 - where he declared...

Gal 3:23 ...before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Gal 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 3:25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Simply put - we are saved by faith - and not by the works of law.

And what this also means is that - Sola-Fide is inline with the scriptures.

As for the Anathemas - presented by the RCC - we must not forget what Paul wrote - in Galatians chapter 1 - where he declared...

Gal 1:7 ...there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be anathema.

Gal 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be anathema.

In light of this warning - it's important to realize that...

...when the Roman Catholic Church placed an anathema on those who preach salvation by faith alone...

...they were actually placing a curse upon themselves - and upon those who follow their teachings.

Sola-Gratia

And so we see - From Scripture alone - we learn that - Christ Alone is ready to save us - by faith alone.

This brings us to the fourth pillar of the Protestant reformation - which is revealed in the Latin phrase - Sola-Gratia

And while I realize that the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church - insist that we are saved by grace...

...we must not fail to realize what they mean - when they use the word - grace.

I would appeal - once again - to the council of Trent - where the RCC's official doctrine of grace is clearly defined.

In response to the Reformation— the RCC defended their version of justification - by declaring...

“Hence, to those who work well unto the end and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a **grace** mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given **to their good works and merits.**”

In other words - the RCC believes that the grace of God - is earned - through good works.

The Council of Trent goes on to assure the Roman Catholic that salvation is something you earn in this way...

“...by those very **works** which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life and to have truly **merited** eternal life.”

WOW - the Roman Catholic Church requires their adherents - to work their way to heaven.

Now - compare this - to the statement Paul presented - in Ephesians chapter 2 - where he declared...

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God,**
Eph 2:9 **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.

Here in these verses - Paul clearly presented the pillar called Sola-Gratia.

And just to be clear - we must not fail to notice that - Paul referred to grace - as the gift of God.

In other words - - grace is the unearned - unmerited gift
- which is received by faith in Jesus alone.

God the Father demonstrate His grace - by offering His only
begotten Son - a sacrifice for our sins.

Then - after the death - burial - and resurrection of Jesus...

...God graciously sent His Holy Spirit - to draw us - to
the foot of the cross...

...so that we might repent - and receive the free gift
of Grace - by faith in Jesus Christ.

I like the way that this pillar is described - in the Lutheran Service
Book which reads...

By grace! On this I'll rest when dying;
In Jesus' promise I rejoice;
For though I know my heart's condition,
I also know my Savior's voice.
My heart is glad, all grief has flown.
Since I am saved by grace alone.

Christian - listen - the Lord isn't calling us - to work for
the free gift of Grace.

No - instead - He is inviting us to receive the free
gift of forgiveness - by faith in Jesus Christ.

And in this way - the grace of God - will always
result in the glory of God - alone.

Soli-Deo Gloria

Now - this brings us to the fifth - and final pillar - of the Protestant reformation - - which is revealed in the Latin phrase - Soli-Deo Gloria

To sum it up with simplicity - Soli-Deo Gloria – refers to the fact that - God deserves all of of the Glory - for our Salvation.

And in order to grasp the importance of this fifth and final pillar...

...I should remind you of the point that Paul made - back in Ephesians chapter 2 - where he declared...

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
Eph 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.
Christian - listen - if we earned our salvation - by our own good works...

...then we have something to boast about.

And if we have something to boast about...

...then - God must share His glory with us.

This reminds me of something Paul wrote - 1st Corinthians 1 - where he declared...

“no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Please trust me when I tell you that - - we aren't going to spend the rest of eternity - bragging about our works.

No - instead - we will be singing the praises of our Savior...

...to Whom belong all honor - and glory -
forevermore

The Lord put it plainly - in Isaiah chapter 42 - where he declared...

Isa 42:8 I am the LORD, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.

Christian - listen - when we get to heaven - we will give all of the glory to God...

...for the way He graciously saved us - from the punishment that we deserve.

All Glory belongs to God and God Alone - because...

...It is God who draws us by His Grace

...It is God who created us to respond by Faith

...It is God IN Christ Who paid for our sins

...it is God who revealed all of this - in His holy Word

...And therefore - it is God who will receive all of the Glory - for all of His wonderful works

And so we see that - the 5 pillars of the Protestant Reformation - are clearly established - according to the revelation of God's word.

Therefore - when we get to heaven - we ought to thank Martin Luther the former catholic priest...

...who became the father of the Protestant reformation.

And let's give God the glory - for the way he used Martin Luther...

...to ground the evangelical church with the 5 pillars - which are summed up as...

1. Sola-Scriptura – Scripture Alone

2. Solus-Christus – Christ alone

3. Sola-Gratia – Grace alone

4. Sola-Fide – Faith Alone

5. Soli-Deo Gloria – For the glory of God Alone

And as we consider the way that the Lord used Martin Luther - to take a stand against heresy...

...I want to encourage every Christian tonight - to become believers...

...who are always ready to defend the faith - which was once and for all - delivered to the Saints.

Whenever we see heresy - creeping into the church - let's follow the example of Martin Luther.

Remember - he began - by studying the scriptures - so that he could rightly divide the word of truth.

Then - after identifying heresy happening in his church - publicly presented the corrections...

...so that those who were espousing those heresies - might repent - and embrace the truth.

And with his example in mind - let's allow reformation day - to remind us that...

...there are time - when we must expose the heresy of false teachers...

...so that we can do our part - to keep the church - grounded on the pillar - of Biblical Truth.