

The Five Solas of the Reformation

October 31 is the 500th Anniversary of the day Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on a church door in Wittenburg. This is generally considered to be the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant movement that grew from this act of Luther's is often summarized by what are called, "the Five Solas", or "only"s. Each 'sola' answered a particular question which, taken together, help us to know what we believe, why we believe and where our confidence rests. The questions answered by the Five Solas match the five "W's" – "Who, What, Where, When, and Why":

1. The first Question is WHERE: "Where can I find the Truth about God and about myself?" The answer the reformers gave was this: "Sola Scriptura - only in Scripture can we find a trustworthy expression of the Truth." Other sources can help our understanding, but only to the extent that they agree with Scripture and do not contradict it." The testimony of Scripture is summarized in 1 Timothy 2:5 – "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men," which leads to –
2. The second question, which is WHO: "Who is this one mediator, the one through whom we are reconciled and have peace with God?" The answer the reformers gave was this: "Solus Christus – only in Jesus Christ are we reconciled to God, as we find in the rest of that verse from 1 Timothy and the next – 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who

gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.'"

3. The third question, then is WHY: "Why would God want to be reconciled to me if I am a sinner?" The answer the reformers gave was this: "Sola Gratia – Only because of his grace can we be saved, as God spoke through Paul in Ephesians 2:4-5, saying "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved"
4. The fourth question is WHEN: "When does the promise of reconciliation become a reality in my life?" The answer the reformers gave was this: "Sola Fide – by Faith Alone, as God testifies, again in Ephesians chapter 2, this time in verse 8, saying 'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.'
5. The fifth question is WHAT: "What, then, should be the motivation behind all I do in my life?" The answer the reformers gave was this: "Soli Deo Gloria – Do all only to the glory of God, as God speaks through Paul in Colossians 3:17 – 'And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'"

All five taken together answer one more question – HOW: "How can I know if I am saved? Am I arrogant to think that I can know that I am saved? Does God want me to be confident of my salvation? These are the questions we hope to answer in the coming weeks.

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