

# The Five Solas Of The Reformation

## The Reformation At 499

Teaching	Reformed Concept	Roman Catholic Concept
<b><i>Sola Scriptura</i></b>	The Bible is the only authority for a believer	The Pope, Tradition & Scripture are the authorities for the Christian
<b><i>Solus Christus</i></b>	Christ's atonement is the only work that provides justification for man	Christ plus man's efforts bring forth justification
<b><i>Sola Gracia</i></b>	God's grace is the sole means of justification	Man's works is the means of obtaining God's grace
<b><i>Sola Fide</i></b>	"Faith alone" in the sole instrumental cause for justification	"Faith plus works" accomplish justification
<b><i>Soli Deo Gloria</i></b>	God alone is glorified in salvation	God and man are both credited

### I. ***Sola Scriptura: Our Only Authority***

- A. **The Roman Catholic Position: Pope + Tradition + Scripture = Authority**
- B. **The Protestant Position: Scripture = Sole Authority** (Col 2:8; Mt 15:6; 1 Cor 2:4-5; 4:6; 1 Th 2:13)

### II. ***Solus Christus: Our Only Savior***

- A. **The Roman Catholic Position: Justification Is The Infusion Of Righteous For A Believer To Accomplish Good Works Towards Salvation**
- B. **The Protestant Position: Christ Alone Does The Work Of Salvation** (Rom 5:9; 2 Cor 5:21)

### III. ***Sola Grace: Our Only Means***

- A. **The Roman Catholic Position: God's Grace + Man's Efforts Accomplish Salvation**
- B. **The Protestant Position: God's Grace Is The Sole Means Of Salvation** (Eph 2:8-9)

### IV. ***Sola Fide: Our Only Instrument***

- A. **The Roman Catholic Position: Faith + Works = Salvation**
- B. **The Protestant Position: Faith Is The Only Instrument Of Salvation** (Rom 5:1; 3:28: 4:1-5)

### V. ***Soli Deo Gloria: Our Only Motivation***

- A. **The Roman Catholic Position: God didn't save us alone, Man helped too.**
- B. **The Protestant Position: God receives all glory, no boasting for man.** (Eph 2:9)

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## Introduction: Luther's Protest & The Beginning Of The Protestant Reformation

### 1. Indulging On The Indulgences

- Luther became troubled with the church's financial abuse with indulgences
- Indulgences = contribute to a worthy causes and the church of Rome offered the sinner an exemption (called "indulgence")
- He would question indulgences based on the theological issue of merit (works)
- Pope Leo X (1513-1521) would perpetuate the sale of indulgences, like his predecessor Julius II did, to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- Luther: "If only the pope knew the extravagance of these greedy bootleggers!"
- Luther thought his address of this issue would bring reform. He wasn't aware that this was the pope's doing. But the Pope knew what he was allowing (all the way to the bank!).

### 2. Tetzel

- In 1517, John Tetzel, a Dominican monk and renown preacher, took up the position of commissioner of indulgences.
- He came to Germany to offer a papal indulgence in exchange for a contribution to build St. Peter's basilica
- Tetzel promised donors that their sacrifices would free souls in purgatory.
  - David Horton: "His fund-raising [for the new basilica] gimmick – the sale of indulgences – was, quite simply, selling forgiveness. Get your dear departed loved ones out of purgatory for a fee and earn credit against your own sins." (*The Portable Seminary*, p. 473)
  - Tetzel's pitch: "Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends, beseeching you and saying, 'Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance.' Do you not wish to?" (ibid)
- Tetzel chanted: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs."
- An Indulgence Certificate which reads (in German): "*In the authority of all the saints, and in compassion towards you, I absolve you from all sins and misdeeds, and remit all punishment for ten days.*" (John Tetzel)
- Tetzel died in 1519

### 3. 95 Theses

- Frederic the Wise of Saxony banned the sale of indulgences under his leadership in Wittenberg. But folks were buying indulgences outside of the city.
- Luther became incensed by the effect of these sales on parishioners' moral and ethical life. This urged him to compose his opposition of indulgences
- On October 31, 1517, Paul pinned his 95 Theses on the door of the All Saint's Church in Wittenberg arguing against indulgences, Tetzel's tactics and other theological problems in the Catholic church
- The Wittenberg door was a sort of a community bulletin board
- Luther argued that no one can truly repent of a sin and then strike a deal with God, but that only God could remove guilt

- The church was also too consumed with wealth and materialism
- Also that the pope had no authority to save souls in purgatory

#### 4. The Doctrines That Defined The Reformation

- Luther wasn't the only Protestant Reformer
- Switzerland produced John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli
- France – the Huguenots (French Calvinists)
- Scotland – John Knox
- Also: Anabaptists,
- Luther wasn't the first – John Wycliffe

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### I. ***Sola Scriptura: Our Only Authority***

#### A. The Roman Catholic Position: Pope + Tradition + Scripture = Authority

- The Pope and the Scriptures are both the ultimate authority for the Church.
- Only Pope could interpret Scripture and call a council (this puts the church above the Scriptures)
- When the Pope spoke ***ex cathedra*** whatever he said was on the same authority as Scripture – it was revelation from God
- **Traditions** supplement Scripture
- This is not a debate about the *infallibility* of Scripture, but the *sufficiency* of Scripture
- "Where does religious authority lie? A Christian finds out what he must believe and how he must live from the sacred institution established by Jesus Christ. The Lord himself founded the Catholic Church and endowed it with a sacred office called the *magisterium* (the Church's authority to teach and interpret divine truth) empowered to teach all truth necessary for our salvation. The pope is the voice of this living *magisterium*, so when he teaches officially, all Christians must obey." (Ernst Troeltsch)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council: "It is **not from sacred Scripture alone** that the [Catholic] Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed," but "**sacred tradition** [transmits] in its full purity God's word which was entrusted to the apostles. Therefore, both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence."

- 4<sup>th</sup> Council Of Trent, Decree concerning the addition and use of the Sacred Books: "Furthermore, to check unbridled spirits, it decrees that no one relying on his own judgment shall in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, distorting the Holy Scriptures in accordance with his own conceptions, presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which Holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation has held and holds or even contrary to the unanimous teaching of the fathers – even those such interpretations should never at any time be published. Those who act contrary to this should be made known by the ordinaries and shall be punished in accordance to the penalties as prescribed by the law." – don't interpret contrary to the Holy Mother Church who holds the right to be the sole judge of interpretation
- They teach that John 16:12-15 guarantees that Catholic Tradition are infallible truth.

**John 16:12-15** <sup>12</sup>I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

- They teach that Traditions are to be held to

**2 Thessalonians 2:15** <sup>15</sup>Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

- We can respond to this claim that the oral and written ("word or our epistle") both apply to the teaching of the Apostles
- We are bound to the teaching of the Apostles, but they have been dead for almost 2,000 years.
- So where do we find the oral and written teachings of the Apostles, in the Scripture alone!
- They teach that "Tradition adds to Scripture, but Scripture is *open* to Tradition." (cited by Sinclair Ferguson, "Tradition In Roman Catholicism," p. 193)
- In a recent version of *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, they view "the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 26, #83)
  - This views the NT as early tradition and that the "living Tradition" continues to form this day
- This view was presented early on with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Constantinople (553 A.D.), Council of Lateran (649 A.D.) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Nicea (787 A.D.)
- But the Council of Trent (1546) defined this position: "The holy ecumenical and general Council of Trent ... clearly perceives that this truth and rule are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us ... Following, then, the example of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with the same sense of loyalty

and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testaments – for God alone is the author of both – together with all the traditions concerning faith and morals, as coming from the mouth of Christ or being inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.” (*Decrees on Sacred Books and on Traditions to be Received*, 1546)

- This implies that no one is able to interpret the Bible apart from the Catholic leadership.
- The Bible and traditions are equated as authoritative
- The Council of Trent also validated the *Vulgate* as the official translation to be used for the Church

- **(Scripture + Tradition) As Interpreted By The Pope = Authority**

- The Pope is presumed by the Roman Catholic Church to be infallible in his interpretation of Tradition
- Larry Miller: “Thus what the Roman Catholic Church declares a passage of Scripture to mean is considered to be the infallible interpretation in the mind of a Roman Catholic person.” (“Understanding Terms In Roman Catholic Evangelism,” *VOICE Magazine*, May/June, 2008)
- The Pope is given this authority because he is seen as the apostolic successor: “the apostles took care to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society ... Therefore, this sacred synod (Vatican II) teaches that by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church, and that he who hears them, hears Christ” (*Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 39-40)

- **Scriptural Evaluation Of The Roman Catholic Position**

**Jeremiah 23:16** <sup>16</sup>Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord.

**Colossians 2:8** <sup>8</sup>Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the **tradition of men**, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

**Matthew 15:6** <sup>6</sup>then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your **tradition**.

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

**Revelation 22:18-19** <sup>18</sup>For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone **adds** to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; <sup>19</sup>and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

## B. The Protestant Position: Scripture = Sole Authority

- With the corruption of Catholic teaching on salvation and the Scriptures, the Protestants had to take clear stands for:
- *Sola Gratia* (Latin for "by grace alone") for salvation
- *Sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone") for authority
- Martin Luther was summoned to the "Diet of Worms" and called upon to recant his position on "Justification by Faith Alone."
- After an evening to ponder his response, Luther declared: "Here I stand, I can do no other!" Luther would not recant unless the Catholic church convinced him biblically.
- To which the Catholics replied: "Well, Protestants simply have their 'paper' pope." [referring to the Bible]
- Catholics will feel confident that they have a "Living Pope" in contrast to the Protestant "Paper Pope"
- **Sola Scriptura** – The authority of the Church is by Scripture alone.
- only one source of truth as the authority of the Church – the Scripture
- "whatever is asserted without the Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed" (George)
- R. C. Sproul's version: "After Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, a series of debates, correspondence, charges, and countercharges ensued, culminating in Luther's dramatic stand at Worms in April 1521. The two most significant transitional points between the theses of 1517 and the Diet of Worms of 1521 were the debates at Augsburg and Leipzig.

"In October 1518 Luther met with Cardinal Cajetan of the Dominicans. Cajetan was acknowledged to be the most learned theologian of the Roman Curia. In the course of their discussions Cajetan was able to elicit from Luther his views on the infallibility of the pope. Luther asserted that the pope could err and claimed that Pope Clement VI's bull *Unigenitus* (1343) was contrary to Scripture.

"In the summer of 1519 the dramatic encounter between **Luther** and Johannes von **Eck** took place at Leipzig. In this exchange Eck elicited from **Luther the admission of his belief that not only could the pope err but church councils could and did err as well**. It was at Leipzig that Luther made clear his assertion: **Scripture alone is the ultimate, divine authority in all matters pertaining to religion**. Gordon Rupp gives the following account:

"Luther affirmed that 'among the articles of John Huss and the Hussites which were condemned, are many which are truly Christian and evangelical, and which the church universal cannot condemn!' This was sensational! There was a moment of shocked silence, and then an uproar above which could be heard Duke George's disgusted, 'Gad, Sir, that's the Plague! ...' Eck pressed his advantage home, and Luther, trapped, admitted that since their decrees are also of human law, Councils may err.

“So by the time Luther stood before the Diet of Worms, the principle of *Sola Scriptura* was already well established in his mind and work. **Only the Scripture carries absolute normative authority. Why? For Luther the *sola* of *Sola Scriptura* was inseparably related to the Scriptures’ unique inerrancy. It was because popes could and did err and because councils could and did err that Luther came to realize the supremacy of Scripture.** Luther did not despise church authority nor did he repudiate church councils as having no value. His praise of the Council of Nicea is noteworthy. Luther and the Reformers did not mean by *Sola Scriptura* that the Bible is the only authority in the church. Rather, they meant that the Bible is the only *infallible* authority in the church.” (“Sola Scriptura: Essential To Evangelism”)

## 1. **God’s authority is not found in the wisdom of men**

**1 Corinthians 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup>And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- It is not the words and wisdom of men that should lead men spiritually, but the power of God.

## 2. **The Word of God trumps the word of men**

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** <sup>13</sup>For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the **word of men**, but as it is in truth, the **word of God**, which also effectively works in you who believe.

## 3. **Men are not to consider what is divinely authoritative beyond what is written in the Word of God**

**1 Corinthians 4:6** <sup>6</sup>Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

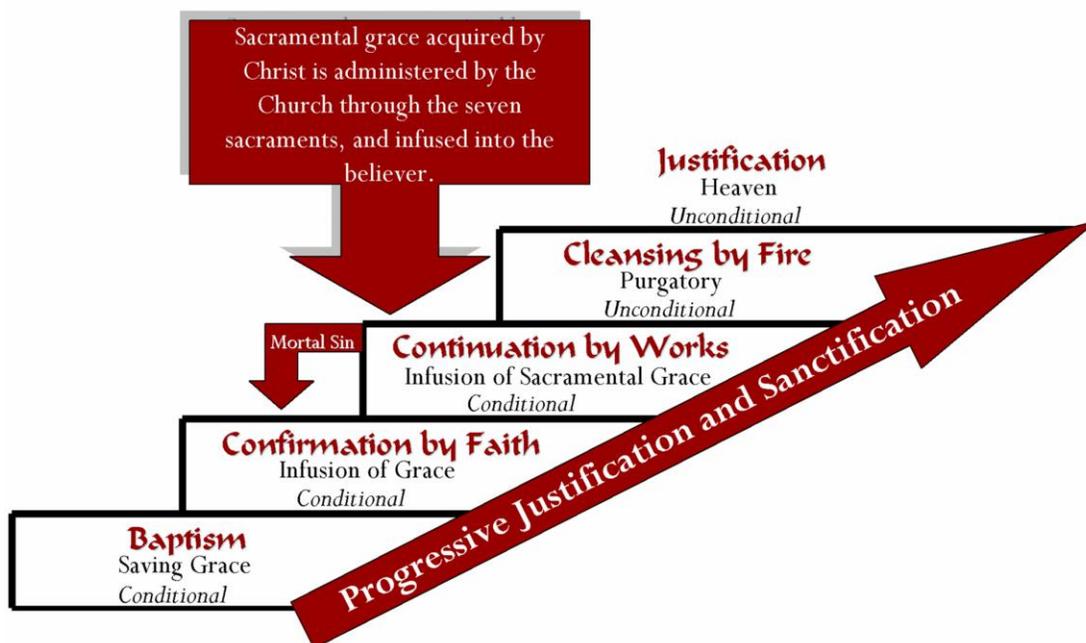
- The Geneva Confession (1536): First we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as a rule of faith and religion, without mixing with it any other things which might be devised by the opinion of men apart from the Word of God, and without wishing to accept for our spiritual government any other doctrine than what is conveyed to us by the same Word without addition or diminution, according to the command of our Lord (Sec. I).
- **The Challenge Today**
  - What does a Roman Catholic do when the Traditions and Scriptures contradict each other?
    - Salvation by Faith vs. Salvation by Faith + Works (Sacraments)
    - Faith is channel of grace vs. Sacraments are channels of God’s grace

- Is there new revelation today or is the Scripture final?

## II. *Solus Christus: Our Only Savior*

### A. The Roman Catholic Position: Justification Is The Infusion Of Righteous For A Believer To Accomplish Good Works Towards Salvation

- Demarest: "Viewing justification as a process, Catholicism speaks both of the inception and the increase justification. Concerning the inception of justification, God through Christ's merits and via the sacrament of baptism remits past sins and infuses into the soul new habits of grace. Although this first stage of justification makes persons inherently righteous via the impartation of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), 'concupiscence' (desire that is the seed-bed of sin but not itself sin) remains in Christians... **Concerning the increase of justification, the baptized work for eternal life by means of love-inspired virtues that are the fruit of the grace infused into the soul. Rome upholds the 'merit of worthiness' (*meritum de condigno*) – i.e. the merit wrought by free moral acts performed in this state of grace. Justification is not a once-for-all event; righteousness increases or decreases proportional to the person's faith and works. Traditional Roman Catholics, in other words, trust in God's infusion of a new nature and plead the worth of their God-enabled works."** (*The Cross And Salvation*, p. 350)



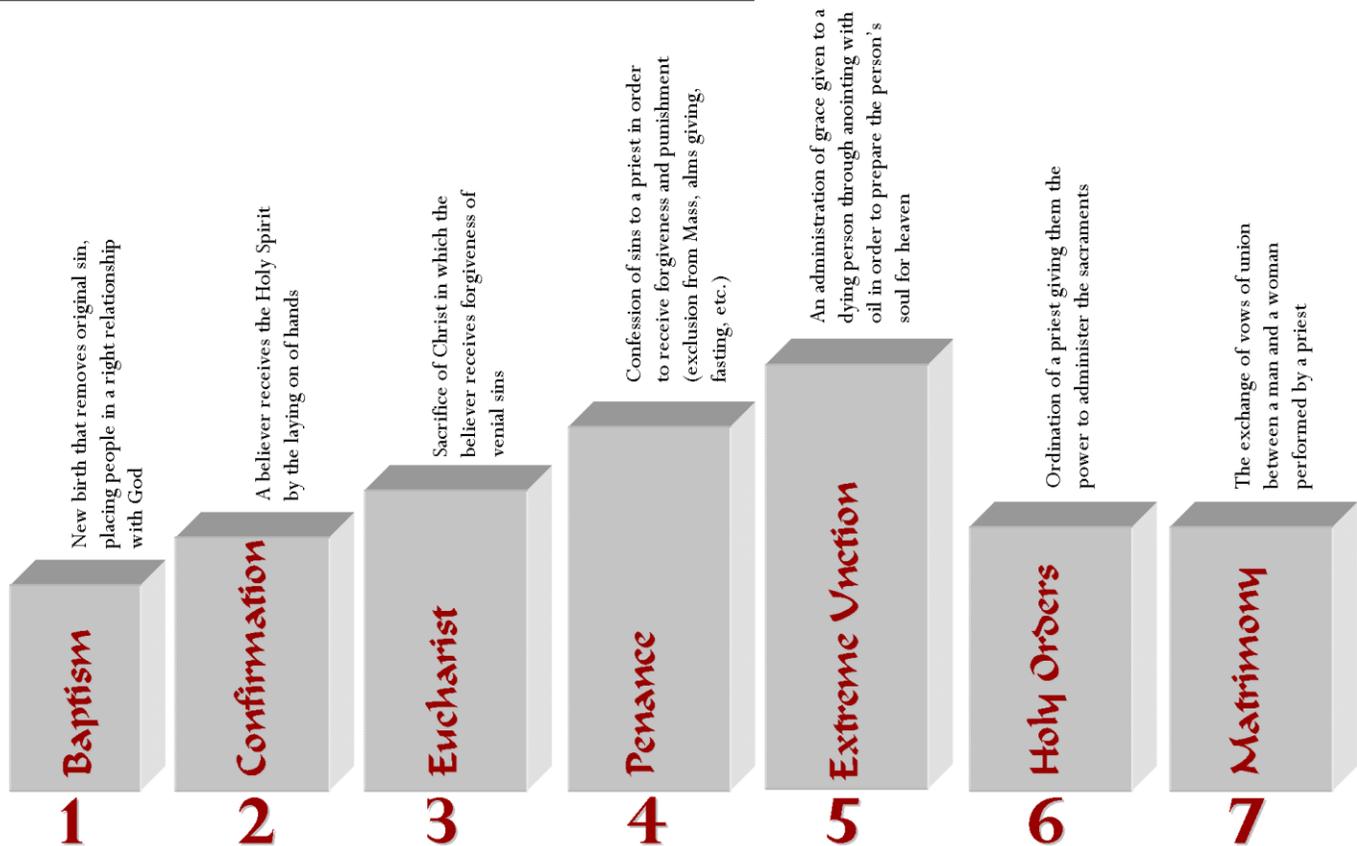
(*The Theological Notebook – Soteriology*, p. 115)

SPIRITUAL EFFECTS OF MEDIEVAL SACRAMENTS	
Sacrament	Effect
Baptism	Regeneration; confers spiritual life
Confirmation	Strengthens spiritual life

<b>Eucharist</b>	Nourishes spiritual life
<b>Penance</b>	Restores spiritual life if lost through sin
<b>Extreme unction</b>	Heals the soul; sometimes the body
<b>Holy orders</b>	Creates rulers of the church
<b>Matrimony</b>	God's blessing on family; children produced; heaven filled with the elect

(Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 439)

## Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church



### B. The Protestant Position: Christ Alone Does The Work Of Salvation

**Romans 5:9** <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>21</sup>For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Ie/ Illustration from Bill Jackson: There is a cripple lying on the floor in a burning room. The RCC position is that Christ unlocks the door and the person is expected to walk out (but he can't because he's crippled with sin). The Biblical position is that Christ not only

unlocks the door, but walks in the burning room and carries the crippled person out of the room unto salvation.

- Christ is the only one capable of saving us because He's God. Sinful mortals cannot add to salvation.
- **Monergism:** only God does the work of salvation
- **Synergism:** God and man do the work of salvation together

### **III. *Sola Grace: Our Only Means***

#### **A. The Roman Catholic Position: God's Grace + Man's Efforts Accomplish Salvation**

- Michael Horton: "Many in the medieval church believed that God saved by grace, but they also believed that their own free will and cooperation with grace was 'their part' in salvation. The popular medieval phrase was, 'God will not deny his grace to those who do what they can.'" <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/essentials.html>

#### **B. The Protestant Position: God's Grace Is The Sole Means Of Salvation**

- "The Reformers maintained that the sinner is saved by the grace of God, His unmerited favor, alone. This doctrine means that nothing the sinner does commends him to the grace of God, and that the sinner does not cooperate with God in order to merit his salvation. Salvation, from beginning to end, is the sovereign gift of God to the unworthy and undeserving. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, who were inclined to boasting: "Who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Cor. 4:7). No one can ever stand before God and say, "Look at me and at what I have done!" God is no one's debtor, not least in matters of salvation (Rom. 11:35)." <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/sola-gratia-christians-are-saved-grace-god-alone/>

### **IV. *Sola Fide: Our Only Instrument***

#### **A. The Roman Catholic Position: Faith + Works = Salvation**

- Christ's sacrifice in addition to meritorious deeds (confession of sins to a priest, prayers, fasting, good works and the sacraments).
- Catholics believe in faith + works
- Catholics deny that God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5), but that God has to make them godly before they can be justified
- This makes "works" necessary for salvation
- "How can a person find God's forgiveness? Two things are necessary. First, sinners must repent and confess their sins to a priest in order to receive God's forgiveness for the eternal punishment that leads to hell. Second, by prayers, fasting, good works, and the sacraments, they must remove the temporal punishment that leads to purgatory. In other words, justification before God comes by a combination of faith and good works." (Troeltsch)

- **Council Of Trent, Session 6 (1547):**
  - "If anyone says that man may be justified before God by his own works...without the grace of God through Jesus Christ – let him be anathema" (Canon 1)
  - "God justifies sinners by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Chapter 6) and "we are said to be justified by faith because faith is the beginning of human salvation " (Chapter 8)
  - Justification is "not remission of sins merely, but also the **sanctification** and **renewal** of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts by which an unrighteous man becomes righteous." (Chapter 7)
  - "Unless hope and love are added to faith, it neither unites a man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body" (Chapter 7)
  - Justification is a **lifelong process** (Chapter 10), Perseverance is not guaranteed (Chapter 13)
  - **"If anyone says, that by faith alone the ungodly are justified in such a way as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to receive the grace of Justification and that it is not necessary for a man to be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema."** (Canon 9)
- The Roman Catholics developed a doctrine in the Middle ages called **treasury of merits** – the church possesses the keys to heaven through the power to transfer excess good works to those who are in purgatory because they are short of good deeds to get out of purgatory
  - Saints like St. Thomas Aquinas or St. Augustine or St. Teresa lived lives so virtuous and meritorious that there is enough to pour into the account of borderline purgatory inhabitants
  - This doctrine of the treasury of merits even became the basis for the selling of indulgences – paying money to buy forgiveness for your sins – keep adding to your treasury
  - This spurred Martin Luther to protest Catholic doctrine and teach Justification by Faith: ***sola fide***
- **Irony:** RC church disputes the imputation of the merits of Christ on a sinner, but hold to a doctrine of imputation of merits of their saints on a sinner
- J. I. Packer: "Official Roman Catholic theology includes sanctification in the definition of justification, which it sees as a process rather than a single decisive event, and affirms that while faith contributes to our acceptance with God, our works of satisfaction and merit contribute too. Rome sees baptism, viewed as a channel of sanctifying grace, as the primary instrumental cause of justification, and the sacrament of penance, whereby congruous merit is achieved through works of satisfaction, as the supplementary restorative cause whenever the grace of God's initial acceptance is lost through mortal sin. Congruous, as distinct from condign, merit means merit that it is fitting, though not absolutely necessary, for God to reward by a fresh flow of sanctifying grace. On the Roman Catholic view, therefore, believers save themselves with the help of the grace that flows from Christ through the church's sacramental system, and in this life no sense of confidence in God's grace can ordinarily be had. Such teaching is a far cry from that of Paul." (*Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs*, Tyndale House, 1995)

## B. The Protestant Position: Faith Is The Only Instrument Of Salvation

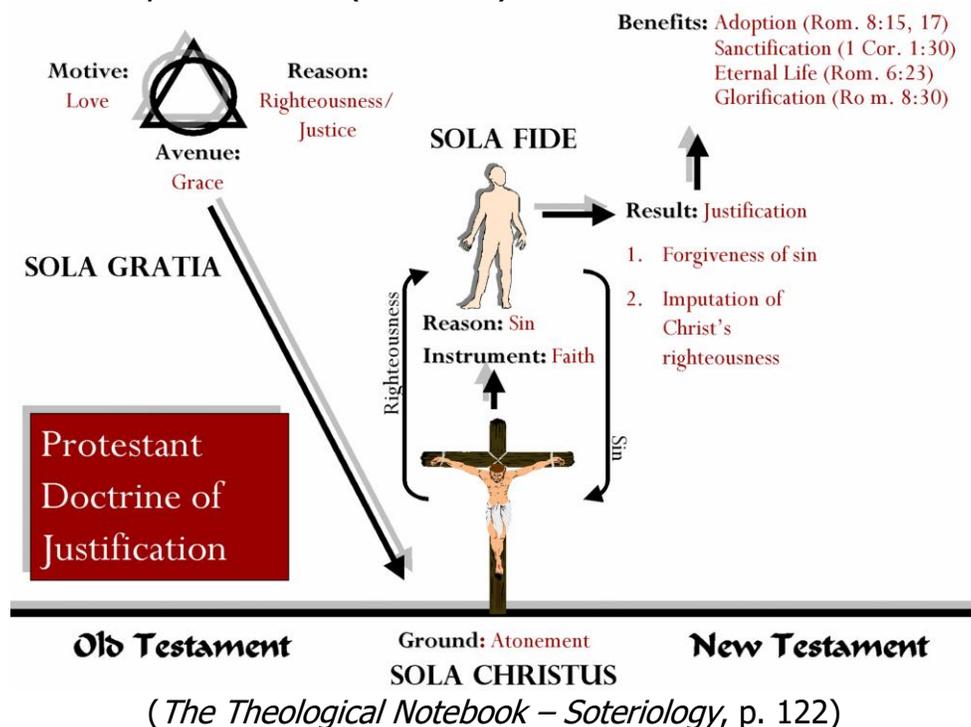
**Romans 5:1** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

**Romans 3:28** <sup>28</sup>Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** apart from the deeds of the law.

**Romans 4:5** <sup>5</sup>But to him who **does not work but believes** on Him who **justifies** the ungodly, his **faith** is accounted for righteousness,

**Romans 4:1-5** <sup>1</sup>What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." <sup>4</sup>Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. <sup>5</sup>But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

- works are dead when it has to do with salvation
- only death of Christ is adequate to pay our debt
- Justification is instantaneous, not a gradual process (Lk 18:14; Jn 5:24)
- Justification is a declaration or righteousness, not actually made righteous. (2 Cor 5:17; 2 Cor 3:18)
- Justification means that righteousness is imputed, not infused. (Rom 4:3-25)
- Justification is by faith alone. (Rom 11:6)



- John MacArthur: "Justification is distinct from sanctification because in justification God does not make the sinner righteous; He declares that person righteous (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16). Notice how justification and sanctification are distinct from one another:
  - Justification imputes Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account (Romans 4:11b); sanctification imparts righteousness to the sinner personally and practically (Romans 6:1-7; 8:11-14).
  - Justification takes place outside sinners and changes their standing (Romans 5:1-2, sanctification is internal and changes the believer's state (Romans 6:19).
  - Justification is an event, sanctification a process." ("Justification By Faith")

## V. *Soli Deo Gloria*: Our Only Motivation

### A. The Roman Catholic Position: God didn't save us alone, Man helped too.

- Synergism – God and man work together to accomplish salvation.
- "Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could. So somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good." (Maria Von Trappe, *The Sound of Music*)

### B. The Protestant Position: God receives all glory, no boasting for man. (Eph 2:9)

- Tim Chester writes: "At the heart of the Reformation was the realization that:
  - We are more helpless than we realize.
  - Christ is more sufficient than we realize.
  - God is more gracious than we realize.
 This is what's meant by *soli Deo gloria*, 'to the glory of God alone.' There's no room in Reformation theology for human boasting."
   
<https://www.crossway.org/blog/2016/10/ten-things-you-should-know-about-the-reformation/>
- Robert Schuller stated that the Reformation "erred because it was God-centered rather than man-centered." Even Protestants can have problems with God receiving all the glory.

## Conclusion:

<http://jenthorn.com/blog/2016/10/27/luthers-justification-story>

In his *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, Luther tells a beautiful parable of justification. Here is a retelling of his story.

There once was a King who chose for himself a bride who was a poor, deformed, harlot. She had no loveliness of her own and yet the King wanted her. As their wedding day arrived the King gave to his bride a "wedding-ring of faith" and the very second he placed that ring on her finger she became his Queen and they were forever united. They became "one" and all that was his became hers. His love, his blessings, his possessions even his kingdom now belonged to her.

Her bridegroom provided her with "all his good things". He washed her with the water of his word, dressed her with "eternal righteousness" and presented her, despite her character, as a "glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle".

This also meant that all that was hers became his. In the intimacy of this union the King took on himself all of his bride's transgressions and debts. He "takes a share in the sins, death, and hell of His

wife, nay, makes them His own, and deals with them no otherwise than as if they were His, and as if He Himself had sinned”.

Now this fallen woman was Queen, but she had lived all of her life as a prostitute and so she did not know how to act as Queen. Though she was freed from her condemnations and showered with all of her husband’s blessings, though she could be “fearless of death [and] safe from hell” her character was still that of a harlot. But, through her union with the King, her character no longer defined her. Her status of Queen defined her, and the longer she lived with her King the more her character changed.

“It is impossible now that her sins should destroy her, since they have been laid upon Christ and swallowed up in Him, and since she has in her Husband Christ a righteousness which she may claim as her own, and which she can set up with confidence against all her sins, against death and hell, saying, “If I have sinned, my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned; all mine is His, and all His is mine,” as it is written, “My beloved is mine, and I am His”

Some, during Luther’s time, thought this to be a disgusting story. They couldn’t wrap their brains around the fact that the King would choose for himself a defiled woman and that he would value faith above virtue. But they were wrong. There is infinite beauty in the doctrine of justification and, what should really give us pause, is that this is our story. The King of Heaven has chosen us to be His bride and with the ring of faith on our finger, we are now His forever. While we are still sinners, sin no longer defines us. We are defined by our status as the Bride of Christ and we can, with all confidence, say with Luther, “My beloved is mine, and I am His.”