

# The Five Solas

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CELEBRATE  
MESSIAH

## Intro

In 1554 Phillip Melanchthon (Luther's co-labourer) wrote, "*sola gratia justificamus et sola fide justificamur*" meaning "only by grace do we justify and only by faith are we justified". This is the first of the five Solas, over time all of the solas show up in various writings at various times by the Protestant Reformers, but they are not systematically catalogued together until quite recent.

Never the less the "five solae" (from Latin, sola, lit. "alone"; usually referred to as the five solas) of the Protestant Reformation are considered the foundational set of principles held by protestant theologians to be central to the doctrine of salvation, this is still taught by the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Each sola represents a key belief in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in **contradistinction** to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers claimed that the Catholic Church, especially its head, the Pope, had usurped divine attributes or qualities for the Church and its hierarchy.

## Five Solas

1. Sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"): The Bible alone is our highest authority.
2. Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Yeshua the Messiah.
3. Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
4. Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Yeshua the Messiah alone is our Lord, Saviour, and King.
5. Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone.

## SOLA SCRIPTURA - Scripture alone

For the reformers and us the Scriptures are our final and dependable authority for all faith and lives (practice). This does not mean that the Bible is the only place where truth is found, but it does mean that everything else we learn about God and his world, and all other authorities, should be interpreted *in light of Scripture*. The Bible gives us everything we need for our theology, our faith and the Godly life.

Every word of the 66 books of the Bible is inspired by God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also helps us to understand and obey Scripture.

**2 Timothy 3:16** says "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

2 Peter 2:20 "inspired by God"

## SOLA FIDE - faith alone

We are saved solely through faith in Yeshua the Messiah because of God's grace and Messiah's merit alone. We are not saved by our merits or declared righteous by our good works. God grants salvation not because of the good things we do, and despite our sin.

As humans, we inherited (from Adam) a nature that is enslaved to sin. Because of our nature, we are naturally enemies of God and lovers of evil. We need to be made alive (regenerated) so that we can even have faith in Messiah. God graciously chooses to give us new hearts so that we trust in Messiah and are saved through faith alone.

God graciously preserves us and keeps us. When we are faithless toward him, he is still faithful.

We can only stand before God by his grace as he mercifully attributes to us the righteousness of Yeshua the Messiah and attributes to him the consequences of our sins. Yeshua's life of perfect righteousness is counted as ours, and our records of sin and failure were counted to Yeshua when he died on the cross.

Sola fide and sola gratia express the teaching of **Ephesians 2:8** "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

The true distinction between the Lutheran / Reformed and the Catholic view of Justification is not an issue of being "declared righteous" versus being "made righteous", but rather it is the *means* by which one is justified. In Catholic theology, after the initial conversion which relies solely on the merits of Christ (Cath. Catechism 2010<sup>1</sup>), righteous works are considered meritorious **toward salvation** in addition to faith, whereas in the Lutheran and Reformed theologies, righteous works are seen as the *result and evidence* of a truly justified and regenerate believer who has received these by faith alone.

Compare this to the Roman Catholic teaching: "Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of charity, and for the attainment of eternal life."

Sola Fide emphasizes salvation as a free gift. The Roman Catholic Church of the time emphasized the use of indulgences (donating money) to buy status with God. Good works, including baptism, were seen as required for salvation. *Sola fide* stated that salvation is a free gift to all who accept it by faith (John 3:16). Salvation is not based on human effort or good deeds (Ephesians 2:9).

## **SOLA GRATIA - grace alone**

*Sola gratia* emphasizes grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done rather than what we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Romans 3:23–25: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins."

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a2.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a2.htm)

Romans 11:5–6: “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”

Ephesians 2:4–10: “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 Messiah - by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Messiah Yeshua. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

### **SOLUS CHRISTUS - Christ alone / Messiah alone**

Reformers emphasized Yeshua’s role as our “high priest” who intercedes on our behalf before the Father. Hebrews 4:15 teaches, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Yeshua is the One who offers access to God, not a human spiritual leader.

God has given the ultimate revelation of himself to us by sending Messiah Yeshua, Colossians 1:15. Only through God’s gracious self-revelation in Jesus do we come to a saving and transforming knowledge of God.

1 Timothy 1:5. Because God is holy and all humans are sinful and sinners, 1 John 1:1 Hebrews 7:25 Romans 8:34. Neither religious rituals nor good works mediate between us and God. Acts 4:12 by which a person can be saved other than the name of Jesus. Hebrews 7:23, and his sacrificial death alone can atone for sin.

### **SOLI DEO GLORIA - to the Glory of God alone**

Glory belongs to God alone. God’s glory is the central motivation for salvation, not improving the lives of people—though that is a wonderful by product. God is not a means to an end—he is the means and the end.

The goal of all of life is to give glory to God alone: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). As The Westminster Catechism says, the chief purpose of human life is “*to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*”