

Reformed Theology
Theological distinctive number three

1. Introduction to series
 - a. Usually preach through books of the Bible.
 - b. Spending some time to work through our theological distinctives.
2. Prayer
3. Introduction to sermon
 - a. “Post Tenebras lux”
 - i. This Latin slogan summarized the protestant reformation of the sixteenth century. It means after darkness light.
 - ii. The church of Jesus Christ was shrouded in great darkness for at least 1300 years.
 1. The clergy had serious issues.
 - a. Many pastors could not read
 - b. Very few understood the gospel.
 - c. Many had concubines.
 - d. There were orgies in the papal palace.
 2. The sermons were in Latin.
 - a. Which meant, that hardly anyone could understand them.
 3. Salvation was procured through participation in the seven sacraments
 - a. In other words, salvation was earned by hard religious work, not freely given to those who believe.
 4. Most people were terrified of purgatory.
 5. Salvation for dead loved ones could be purchased from the church.
 6. Most people prayed to the saints for nearly everything.
 7. In addition, people were very superstitious. They believed in witchcraft, fairies, and good and bad omens.
 8. Most importantly, the Word of God had vanished from the church.
 - a. No one had Bibles.
 - b. And the ones who did, could not read it, since it was in Latin.
 - c. Furthermore, it was assumed that the Pope and tradition, not the Scriptures, had final authority.
 - iii. Summary- the church of Jesus Christ was shrouded in great darkness.
 1. But then, God acted, nearly blinding the church with tremendous gospel light.
 2. What happened?
 3. God raised up leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Thomas Cranmer, and John Knox to trumpet forth the great doctrines of the Bible.

- iv. What were these great doctrines?
 1. There are five—they are called the five solas of the reformation.
 2. These doctrines summarize what it means to be reformed.
 3. GCF is a church in the reformed tradition.
 4. In other words, we think these five solas are really important.
 5. We will look briefly at each one this morning.

- v. But before we do, it is important to recognize our current predicament.
 1. The American church is also currently shrouded in great darkness.
 2. The prosperity gospel is on the rise.
 3. Expository preaching is rare.
 4. Penal substitution is denied by many.
 5. And the authority of Scripture is being slowly eroded.
 6. After an in-depth study, several scholars summarized American Christianity as Moralistic, Therapeutic, Deism.
 - a. Moralistic—we are saved by being good.
 - b. Therapeutic—God is our therapist
 - c. Deism—God is only involved in our lives to respond to our needs, never to judge or discipline.

- vi. Now, more than ever...
 1. We must recover the great doctrines of the reformation.
 2. If we don't, the church of Jesus Christ in America is in deep trouble.
 3. Let's look at the great doctrines of the reformation together.

1. Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

- a. Definition:
 - i. Scripture alone is our final authority.
 - ii. This is review from two weeks ago.

- b. Proof text:

i. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) — 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- c. Exposition:
 - i. The Bible is the very word of God.
 1. Every word of the Bible and every part of the Bible.
 2. Furthermore, God can not lie.
 3. Therefore, the Bible is without error.

 - ii. If the Bible is the very word of God, the Bible contains the very authority of God.
 1. This means that when the Bible speaks God speaks.
 2. To disobey the Bible is to disobey God.

- d. Application:

- i. During the Reformation the RCC taught that church tradition, not the Bible, was the final authority.
- ii. Before we are too critical of the RCC, we need to look in the mirror.
- iii. What is the final authority for many protestants?
 - 1. A favorite theologian?
 - 2. The dictates of pop culture?
 - 3. A teacher or professor?
 - 4. Science?
 - 5. Tic Tok?
 - 6. Fox news?
 - 7. Pop psychology?
 - 8. Our feelings?
- 9. Contrary to all of these notions, the Word of God is the final authority, no matter how unpopular that makes us.
- iv. Affirming sola scripture is an all or nothing proposition!
 - 1. You must settle this issue in your mind.
- v. We must also consider the opposite error of the RCC.
 - 1. Many protestants totally ignore tradition to their own peril.
 - 2. It is just me and my Bible and Jesus.
 - 3. The Bible must be interpreted in the context of the church—including church history—because it was given to the church.
- vi. What does Sola Scripture mean at GCF?
 - 1. Sola Scripture leads to tota Scriptura (we preach the full counsel of God)
 - 2. The best way to do this is expository preaching...
 - 3. It is sufficient for preaching, discipling, counseling, and leading the church.

e. *Transition*

- i. *Affirming sola scriptura leads naturally to solus Christus, the second point.*

2. Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

a. Definition:

- i. The RCC taught that people were saved through the treasury of merit, the work of the priests, prayers to Mary, and prayers to the saints.
- ii. The reformers taught that Jesus Christ—and Jesus Christ alone—is the savior.
- iii. In other words, he is the only way to God. No one else, and nothing else, can save!
- iv. All other ways lead to death and destruction.

b. Proof text:

- i. **Acts 4:7–12 (ESV)** — 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this

man is standing before you well. **11** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. **12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

ii. **1 Timothy 2:5–6 (ESV)** — **5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

iii. **Luke 24:46–47 (ESV)** — **46** and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47** and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

c. Exposition

- i. Our salvation is only accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement is the sole basis for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.
- ii. He is the only Mediator between God and men.
- iii. The gospel is not preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

d. Application:

- i. Jesus is not just one way—he is the only way.
- ii. This means that the sincere Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or Mormon is lost.
- iii. This means that one must have conscious faith in Jesus Christ to be saved.
- iv. Salvation is only found in the name of Jesus—and through his life, substitutionary death, and resurrection.
- v. Jesus Christ will not share his salvific glory with another.
 1. He will not share it with Allah, Confucius, or the false teaching of Joseph Smith and the Buddha, etc...
 2. How dare we even include those men in the same sentence as Jesus Christ!!!
 3. He is the creator and sustainer of all things.
 4. He shed his blood on the cross...
 5. He rose from the grave.
 6. And he currently rules and reigns over all things.

e. Objection:

- i. Is there really only one way???
 1. This question often befuddles me.
 2. A much more appropriate questions is this, “why did God make a way? All we have done is ignore his commands and spurn his kindness.”
 3. Instead, we complain that there is only one way.
 - a. Imagine being locked up in a prison cell for 50 years. Finally, the prison warden comes and tells you that there is a way to be free. All you need to do is walk out of your jail cell.
 - b. But this is the only way to be free...
 - c. He says-
 - d. If you try to tunnel through the walls, we will give you 50 more years.
 - e. If you try to climb out the window, we will give you 50 more years.

- f. If you try to stab a prison guard and steal his keys, you will be given 50 more years.
 - g. But there is a way to be free... one way.... You simply walk out the door.
 - h. Can you imagine the prisoner complaining.... "I can't believe that you have given me only one choice..."
4. God says, "At great personal cost to myself, I sent Jesus my only son to forgive your sins, reconcile you to myself, and adopt you into my family, plus do a thousand other things." And we complain, "why didn't you give us more options, more saviors???" You have not done enough!!!" Seriously!!!
- ii. *Transition-*
 - 1. *We are saved by Christ alone, but how do all the benefits of salvation get to us? this brings us to the next sola.*

3. Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

- a. What is our greatest need?
 - i. A good job
 - ii. A godly spouse
 - iii. Money in the bank
 - iv. Health?
 - v. Food, water, and clothing?
 - vi. There is something we need more than all of these things combined.
 - vii. Our greatest need is to be declared righteous by a holy God.
 - viii. But how does this happen?
- b. Definition:
 - i. RCC version
 - 1. Righteousness is infused into us...
 - ii. Protestant version
 - 1. Justification is not a process.
 - 2. Justification is a declaration
 - 3. Righteousness does not come from us.
 - 4. Jesus Christ is the basis for our righteousness.
 - 5. We are declared righteous even though we are not practically righteous.
 - 6. Justification is through faith alone.
- c. Proof text
 - i. **Romans 1:16–17 (ESV) — 16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."
 - ii. **Romans 3:27–28 (ESV) — 27** Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. **28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

iii. **Philippians 3:8–9 (ESV) — 8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

d. Illustration:

- i. Luther understood the law of God and Luther understand God's holiness.
- ii. He knew that no one would be allowed to enter God's presence if they were not perfectly righteous.
- iii. As a result, he worked really hard to be righteous. What did he do?
 1. For starters, he quite law school to enroll in the monastery.
 2. He thought being a professional Christian would surely earn him a spot in heaven.
 3. Once in the monastery Luther gave himself to the monastic life with incredible vigor.
 4. **One scholar writes,**
 - a. "He did not simply engage in prayer, fasts, and ascetic practices (such as going without sleep, enduring bone- chilling cold without a blanket, and flagellating himself), he pursued them earnestly."
 5. He fasted longer than anyone else.
 - a. He punished his body so much, that he later claims that he did permanent damage to his digestive system.
 6. He prayed longer than anyone else.
 7. He confessed his sins longer than anyone else.
 - a. Luther would go to confession many times a day—spending hours in morbid introspection—realizing that sins were not just actions but thoughts and motives. There is no way he could confess all of them. He would get up to leave the confessional and realize he had left some evil motive or wicked thought out of his confession and he would get back on his knees and continue to confess his sins.
 - b. On one occasion Luther spend **6 hours** confessing the sins he had committed just the previous day. (Sproul, 104)
 - c. Later in life he said,
 - i. "I was indeed a pious monk and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it... If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortification even to death, by means of my watchings, prayers, reading and other labors." (Daubigne, 31)
 8. Then he rediscovered the gospel in the book of Romans. His life, and the course of Western Civilization were forever changed.

e. Application

- i. Before we get too critical of the RCC, we need to admit that many of us, live like Roman Catholics.
 1. We believed that we are justified by faith plus....
- ii. The Bible teaches that we are justified by faith plus nothing...
- iii. Transition
 1. *We are justified by faith alone, but why? This brings us to the next sola.*

4. **Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)**

a. Definition:

- i. Salvation is all of grace, from first to last!
- ii. Grace is favor freely given to those who deserve judgment.
- iii. Grace is a gift.
- iv. It can't be earned.

- v. Furthermore, God is the one who initiates the gift...
 1. If we ask for a gift, it is not really a gift.
 2. God freely gave his son to those who were not seeking the gift.
 3. This is the heart of grace.

b. Proof text

i. **Ephesians 2:1–3 (ESV)** — **1** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

ii. **Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)** — **10** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

iii. **John 15:16 (ESV)** — **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

iv. **John 15:19 (ESV)** — **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

c. Illustration

- i. The man drowning...
- ii. Verses the dead man...
- iii. Luther said that this issue was the most important issue of the reformation.

d. Significance:

- i. Salvation is all of Grace.
- ii. Salvation is monergistic.

- iii. We did not chose God he chose us.
- iv. We have nothing do boast in.
- v. This should humble us...
- vi. *Furthermore, it ensures that God gets all the glory in salvation.... Which brings us to the last point.*

5. Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be The Glory)

a. Definition:

- i. Salvation is all of God and has been accomplished completely and perfectly by God, and it is all for God's glory alone.
- ii. This is really the logical conclusion of all the other solas.
- iii. It highlights the God centerdness of the Christian faith.
- iv. We must then glorify Him always.
- v. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for His glory alone.

b. Proof texts

i. **Romans 11:33–36 (ESV)** — **33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! **34** “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” **35** “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” **36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

ii. **1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)** — **31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

iii. Eph. 1:5-6

c. Application:

- i. God is the one who created us.
- ii. God is the one who chose us.
- iii. God is the one who effectually called us.
- iv. God is the one who lived, died, and rose from the grave.
- v. God is the one who justifies us.
- vi. God is the one who adopts us.
- vii. God is the one who will preserve us to the end.
- viii. God is the one who will glorify our bodies someday.
- ix. It is all God; he gets all the glory.
- x. God save us as trophies of his grace!!!!
- xi. As a result, we must live for his glory with every fiber of our being, in every area of our lives...
 - 1. Marriage
 - 2. Parenting
 - 3. Recreation
 - 4. Vacation
 - 5. Work

6. Sexuality
7. Etc...

- xii. This dramatically changed the course of Europe and Western civilization.
- xiii. Our primary goal as a church is not to make everyone feel happy, entertain, or tug on heart strings.
- xiv. Our primary goal is to glorify God in all that we think, say, and do.

d. Transition

- i. *In summary-*
- ii. *Scripture alone is our authority.*
- iii. *We are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, all for the glory of God alone!!!*

6. Conclusion

- a. It is now 500 years after the Protestant Reformation.
- b. Once again, the church of Jesus Christ is shrouded in deep darkness.
 - i. When looking on outward appearance's things seem to be going well.
 - ii. Megachurches are springing up everywhere.
 - iii. Christian publishing houses are printing books left and right.
 - iv. Costco sells Christian books at steeply discounted prices.
 - v. Yet one scholar writes,
 1. "The evangelical church is largely a whitewashed tomb. Tragically, here outward façade masks her true internal condition." (Lawson, Calvin, 132)

c. Evidence

- i. In my doctoral research I came across a fascinating, yet depressing study. A scholar listened to four sermons from nine of America's largest evangelical churches.¹ After listening to 36 sermons (four sermons from each church), the author detected four obvious patterns.
 1. First, he noticed that "the gospel at best is assumed; most of the time it's entirely absent." He writes, "in 36 sermons, the good news of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection was unclear 36 times. Often, some or all of these facets of the Christian Gospel were left out."²
 2. Second, he noticed, "Repentance rarely comes across as something urgent and necessary; instead, it's either optional or not worth mentioning at all."³
 3. Third, he observed that many of the sermons contained a watered-down version of the prosperity gospel... "if you listened in as a visitor, it would be hard not to

¹ Colton Corter, "4 Reflections after Listening to 18 Hours of Sermons in America's Biggest Churches," *9 Marks Journal* What's Wrong With Gospel-Centered Preaching Today? (March 2020): 5-9.

² Corter, 5.

³ Corter, 6.

come away thinking that God wants you to live a happy life full of relational, mental, and emotional ‘wins.’”⁴

4. Fourth, he observed that “The use of the Bible generally fell into two categories: misuse or abuse.”⁵

d. What must we do?

i. We must pray for “post tenebras lux.”

ii. In other words, we must pray that after the church’s current darkness God would shed his glorious gospel light.

iii. We must pray that God would raise up Christians who will once again trumpet the five solas of the reformation.

1. Scripture alone is our authority.
2. Salvation is by faith alone.
3. Salvation is through Christ alone.
4. Salvation is by grace alone.
5. We must live for the glory of God alone.

iv. The church of Jesus Christ must refocus on these great doctrines that turned Western civilization upside down.

v. I will give Charles Spurgeon the last word.

vi. “We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitefields, men fit to mark eras, whose name breathe terror in our enemies ears. We have dire need of such. Whence will they come to us? They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument in the hand of the Spirit for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land...” (Spurgeon, quoted by Lawson, Calvin, 133).

⁴ Corter, 7.

⁵ Corter, 8.