

In Christ Alone
Mark 12:35-40
Rev. Brian Bill
October 28-29, 2017

Play “The Reformation” Video

We were introduced to the “5 Solas” one year ago this weekend in a sermon called, “Engage with the Reformation.” The second part of that message will air on Moody Radio (89.3) Sunday at 11:00 a.m. and again at 7:30 p.m. if you’d like to listen to it.

Because the Protestant Reformation began 500 years ago, is it just a relic of history? Did it achieve its intended purposes so we no longer need to talk about it? As Michael Reeves puts it: *“Was the Reformation just an unfortunate and unnecessary squabble over trifles, a childish outburst that we can all put behind us now that we are grown up?”*

Last year, on October 31, Pope Francis announced that after 500 years, Protestants and Catholics *“have the opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding each other.”* Recently, a so-called TV preacher called for an end to the Reformation and for Protestants and Catholics to unite.

Two weeks ago three Catholic Churches and four Lutheran Churches got together for a joint worship service in Moline. According to an article in the Dispatch/Argus, one of the organizing pastors explained the purpose, *“Instead of discussing the differences between the two church denominations, we’re going to celebrate the ways we act together.”*

I want to suggest that now, more than ever; we need a fresh reformation revival. Robert Godfrey puts it like this: *“The Reformation is not a museum to be visited occasionally on a tour bus. It was and is a vital movement for truth and life in the church of Jesus.”*

While sincere Protestants and Catholics often find themselves as allies in defending the unborn, upholding marriage as between one man and one woman (though some denominations have caved on this issue), and standing against

persecution of Christians (we'll focus on this next weekend), there are still deep doctrinal differences that continue to divide us.

For example, according to the Catholic Catechism, "...*The Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence...the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God...has been entrusted to the living, teaching, office of the Church alone...to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.*" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," Part One, Section One, Chapter Two, Article Two, Lines 82 and 85, www.vatican.va).

Sadly, according to a Pew Research Center survey released just two months ago, Protestants and Catholics today are more similar religiously than they are different. Here are three key findings that I find deeply disturbing:

- About half of U.S. Protestants (52%) say both good deeds *and* faith in God are needed to get into heaven, a historically Catholic position.
- 46% of Protestants say the Bible provides all the religious guidance Christians need, a traditionally Protestant belief known as *sola scriptura*. But 52% say Christians should look for guidance from church teachings and traditions as well as from the Bible, the position held by the Catholic Church.
- And most alarming of all, just 30% of U.S. Protestants affirm *both* sola fide and sola scriptura!

If we close this book (the Bible), we turn off the light. We're going to open it now and be guided by the Light of the World as He enlightens His Word for us. I'm reminded of 2 Timothy 2:7 where the Apostle Paul states that we must do our part as the Lord does His part: "***Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.***" As we engage our minds, He will give us understanding. We're going to especially need this today, as the passage we're going to ponder is profound and even a bit perplexing.

Let's read Mark 12:35-40 together: "***And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?' David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him Lord. So how is***

he his son?’ And the great throng heard him gladly. And in his teaching he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.’”

Let’s pray right now so that we will think this passage over and that the Lord will give us understanding.

As we tackle this text we’re going to see elements of each one of the Solas. Observe in verse 35 that Jesus asks a rhetorical question as part of his teaching in the temple: **“How can the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?”** The name **“Christ”** is the Hebrew word *messiah* and literally means, *“the anointed one.”* In the account recorded in Matthew 22:42, we see two additional questions that Christ asked: **“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”**

As we’ve pointed out previously, Jesus was a master at using questions. Everyone knew that the Christ would be a descendant of David. Listen to what God says to King David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13: **“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”**

The Bible is clear that Jesus is the Son of David. We’ve already seen that in Mark 10:47 when Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, cried out: **“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”** And when Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd clamored according to Mark 11:10: **“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”** In the last chapter of the Bible Jesus said this about himself in Revelation 22:16: **“I am the root and descendant of David.”**

This alone is a deep truth but Jesus now takes them, and us, even deeper. I want you to notice that He goes to the source of all authority, the Scriptures. Here we see Jesus demonstrating *sola scriptura*.

1. In Scripture Alone. Look at Mark 12:36: **“David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared...”** We see in this one verse the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. David wrote the words, but he did so **“in the Holy Spirit”** so that the exact words God wanted written down were recorded. Inspiration is not dictation but rather the Holy Spirit superintending so that the exact words, written by the human author,

are precisely what God wanted said. Listen to 2 Peter 1:21: ***“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”***

In 1521, Martin Luther, was summoned to appear before the Roman Emperor to defend what he had taught and written. Here’s what he said: *“The works are mine...but unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of 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. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.”*

On the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, we affirm *sola scriptura*. I was helped in my understanding by Steve DeWitt in a post called, *Sola Scriptura: A Scripture-Alone Life*.

- **Scripture Over Us** (We submit to Scripture). This is the issue of *authority*.
- **Scripture Under Us** (We stand on Scripture). This is the issue of *trust*.
- **Scripture In Us** (We meditate on Scripture). This is the issue of *transformation*.
- **Scripture Through Us** (We live out Scripture). This is the issue of *obedience*.

The Scriptures must be *over, under, in* and lived out *through* us.

2. Because of Christ Alone. The religious leaders had preconceptions that the Messiah would be an earthly king like David, who would conquer the Romans. They were right in believing the Messiah would be a descendant of David but they missed that He would also be divine. After reminding His listeners of the inspiration and authority of Scripture, Jesus quotes from Psalm 110:1: ***“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.’”*** The Jews all believed that this psalm was speaking of the coming Messiah but they just skimmed the surface. Amazingly, Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to 33 times in the New Testament!

As we unpack this carefully we’ll see that the Messiah is much more than a mere man. Do you see the name **“Lord”** used twice? This is the Greek word *kurios*, which means, *“owner and master.”* It’s the Old Testament equivalent of *Jehovah*, or *Yahweh*, which means, *“the self-existent One.”* It’s what God called himself

when Moses wanted to know who He was in Exodus 3:14: ***“I am who I am.”*** This name was considered so holy that the Jews would not pronounce it.

Go back to the beginning of verse 36 where we see that David, moved by the Holy Spirit is declaring, ***“The Lord (Yahweh) said to my (David’s) Lord (Yahweh)...”*** David is referring to the coming Messiah as His Lord, using one of the greatest divine titles of the Old Testament. You’d expect David’s descendants to look back at the revered King David and call him their Lord but David looks ahead to someone coming from his lineage and calls Him Lord! The Messiah is not *like* Lord God; He *is* Lord God.

By the way, do you see the Trinity in this passage? ***“David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, ‘The Lord (the Father) said to my Lord (the Son)...’*** We see sameness and distinctiveness within the Godhead.

If this is a bit confusing, it will become clearer as we continue. Yahweh the Father said to Yahweh the Son, ***“Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.”*** The Messiah is placed in a position of authority that is co-equal with Almighty God. The word ***“sit”*** refers to a continuous sitting and the ***“right hand”*** is a reference to preference and honor. In the ancient world of warfare, when a ruler was conquered he was obligated to put his neck under the foot of the triumphant king, signifying defeat and subjection. Jesus will reign and rule over all. Every enemy will be defeated. Sin and Satan are subject to His sovereignty.

Jesus gives a succinct summary of the Messiah’s nature and then asks a rhetorical question in verse 37: ***“David himself calls him Lord. So how is He his son?”*** In that culture no father would ever refer to his son or descendant as Lord. Children were considered property and were certainly never superior to their fathers. And yet, David knows that his coming descendant will be called *son* and *sovereign*. This verse, written hundreds of years before Christ, is evidence that the Messiah would be 100% God and 100% man.

Jesus is clearly claiming to be the son of David’s lineage *and* the sovereign Lord of the universe! He is Messiah *and* Master! Jesus is from the line of David *and* the Lord of all! The Messiah both *precedes* David because He is divine *and* the Messiah is *descended* from David because He is human. This helps us understand Isaiah 7:14: ***“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, [he will be human] and shall call his name Immanuel [he will be ‘God with us’].”*** This is fleshed out (pun intended) in Isaiah 9:6-7 where we see the twin truths of Son and Sovereign:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” BTW, this is the theme verse for our Christmas outreach December 9-10 when we will feature both our children’s and adult choirs in a presentation called, *“An Unusual Peace.”*

Christ’s humanity and deity are also seen in Romans 1:3-4: ***“Concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [human] and was declared to be the Son of God [divine] in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** *Jesus became what He had never been before without losing what He had always been.*

Why does it matter that Jesus is human and divine? Here’s why. Because He is God, He is sovereign. Because He is man, He can be our substitute by taking our place of punishment on the cross. God the Father is just and therefore demands payment for our sins and because He is a God of grace, He provides the Savior, who shed His blood as full payment for our sins. He is just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Him.

So far we’ve seen in this brief passage the doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of the incarnation. *If we don’t hold to the authority of Scripture we won’t hold on to the authority of the Savior.* Sola Scriptura leads to Solas Christus. As we continue in this passage we can see the other three Solas as well.

3. Through Faith Alone. I love the response of the people to these tremendous truths in verse 37: ***“And the great throng heard him gladly.”*** The word ***“great”*** means, *“many”* and ***“throng”*** refers to the common people. I love how Jesus drew common crowds to himself. That reminds me of what William Tyndale, the great Bible translator said, *“If God spare my life, ‘ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than the Pope does.”*

The word ***“heard”*** has the idea of listening with attention so that one responds to what is being said. Notice that they heard him ***“gladly,”*** which means, *“happily and with great pleasure.”* One translation says they *“listened with delight.”*

The religious leaders had created all sorts of holy hoops for people to jump through but what Jesus looks for is a simple response of faith in His finished work. The heart of the Reformation is that the free gift of salvation is received *through faith alone*. We receive Christ by faith and then commit to follow Him. Over 20 of our

high schoolers are on a retreat this weekend where the theme is *Follow Me*. Here are the names of two of the sessions so you can be praying for them: *Following Together* and *Fishing Together*.

Luther called justification by faith “*the article by which and by which the church stands.*” Look at Romans 3:22 – “***The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe***” and Romans 3:28: “***For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.***”

You can't do enough good to be good to go because you are not good enough for God. Works don't work. If you want to be saved, Acts 16:31 says, “***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.***”

When we focus in *Scripture Alone* we see that it's because of *Christ Alone* through *Faith Alone*. We discover next that the religious leaders didn't get *by grace alone*.

4. By Grace Alone. Grace can be defined as “*God's favor toward the unworthy*” or “*God's benevolence on the undeserving.*” Ephesians 2:8-9: “***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.***” Salvation is by grace alone not by our own efforts.

Jesus wants us to fully understand that works don't work and a focus on externals is ultimately empty and exhausting. Let's go back to Mark 12:38: “***And in his teaching he said...***” We know from Luke 20:45 that Jesus is giving some special instruction to his disciples “***while all the people were listening.***”

What Jesus is about to say reminds me of what many of the reformers said in response to ritual, routine and religious excess. When Ulrich Zwingli was serving as a priest in Switzerland, he broke with traditional Roman Catholic practice by preaching in clear expository fashion in the German vernacular of the people, spending six years teaching straight through the New Testament. This giant of the Reformation took his cues from Christ, as he was particularly indignant about the pomp, hypocrisy, and idolatry of man-made religion. He labored to free people from the burdens imposed by the religious leaders.

Notice the warning Jesus gives in verse 38: “***Beware of the scribes...***” This word means, “*to watch out.*” Both the Pharisees and Sadducees had scribes who were charged with hand copying the Scriptures. But instead of letting the Scriptures

penetrate their inner lives they focused on externals and became self-righteous. Jesus lists six sins they committed in verses 38-40. Sadly, they probably thought they were working their way to heaven.

- **Liked walking around in long robes.** The word *“like”* means, *“to please or desire.”* It gave them great pleasure to be seen parading around like spiritual celebrities in fashionable and flowing white robes. Similar types of robes were worn by kings, emperors and military officers; while common people wore colored robes. They had trains at the bottom that would make them appear like they were gliding. Jesus let them have it in Matthew 23:5: *“They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries [small leather pouches that carried verses] broad and their fringes long.”*
- **Enjoyed being greeted in the marketplaces.** These men also liked being saluted when they were at the Freight House Farmers Market in Davenport. When scribes would pass by, the people were expected to stand up and call them *“rabbi, master, father”* or even, *“My great one.”*
- **Took the best seats in the synagogues.** These special seats were located at the front of the synagogue right next to the box that contained the sacred Torah scrolls. By sitting up front everyone could see them as they acted like they were guarding God’s Word. I have memories of serving as an associate pastor many years ago when I would have to sit up on the platform behind the senior pastor as he preached. I never thought this was the best seat because people could see me falling asleep!
- **Sat at places of honor at feasts.** These A-List celebrities not only had the best seats in spiritual settings, they also occupied places of honor in social settings. They loved to recline on couches right next to the host.
- **Devoured widow’s houses.** Scribes served as estate planners and would often convince vulnerable widows to sign everything over to them. God has a special place in his heart for widows and has given clear commands for how they are to be cared for. In Isaiah 10:1-4, God pronounces woe upon those who rob widows. These scribes were servants of greed and not servants of God. In a similar way, the selling of indulgences in the Middle Ages led to greed and the taking advantage of people. This really lit Luther

up and was the issue behind his posting of the 95 Theses on the castle door in Wittenberg.

- **Offered pretentious and long prayers.** The word “*pretense*” means to “*shine before.*” They measured their spirituality by how pompous and protracted their prayers were. I’m sure they were using King James English even before the King James Version came out!

5. For the Glory of God Alone. It’s so easy to be religious and yet not have a relationship with the living God. Verse 40 ends with some harsh words: “***They will receive the greater condemnation.***” The word “***greater***” means, “*over and above.*” Another translation says that they will be “*punished more severely.*” Judgment is reserved for those who focus on outward religiosity.

During the middle ages, there was a clear distinction between the clergy and the laity. The Reformation got rid of the dividing line between the sacred and the secular, arguing that all of life is to lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. We can all live on mission in the vocation God has called us to. How we do our work is a way to worship and a way to witness.

Here’s a news flash: *Life is not about you.* He’s God and you’re not. Our purpose in life is not to gain popularity, gather possessions or garner pleasure. The goal of life is to give God the glory alone; to live our lives in such a way that He is pleased and others are drawn to Him.

The Reformation is not just a bit of history that we can move on from. It was not principally a negative movement but a positive reclamation of the gospel. As such, these summary statements must become part of our story today.

In Scripture Alone
By Grace Alone
Through Faith Alone
Because of Christ Alone
For the Glory of God Alone

There’s a member of Edgewood that has been so impacted by the 5 Solas that I wanted her to share today. Ruth McAnally, could you come up and tell us how God has used these statements in your life?

1. When you heard about the 5 Solas a year ago, what were your initial thoughts?

I thought about how true they were and how much they had already impacted my life even as a young girl, a wife, a mother, and a follower of Christ.

God has provided for our every need throughout these past few years and especially this past year. He has blessed us beyond measure...for me, the 5 Solas and using them in my life is a big part of all this.

October is a special month for me.

- On October 19th, 1973 my husband Dave was saved - *Solas Christus!*
- On October 25th, 1973 I asked Christ into my life - *Solas Christus!*
- On October 29th, 1975 Amy was born at 26 weeks and weighed less than 2 pounds - *Sola Fide!*
- On October 31st, 2010 I recommitted my life to Christ - *Sola Scriptura!*
- On October 30th, 2015 I chose a motto "Grace Wins" due to turmoil, hardships, and unknowns. I clung to this - *Sola Gratia!*
- On October 30th, 2016 I heard about the solas for the first time. I remember you had all of us repeat them several times during the service – *Soli Deo Gloria!*

2. It sounds like you think about these Solas on a regular basis. Why is that?

They have had a huge impact on my life. I think of them almost daily...mainly because I have them listed at the top of my prayer sheet and say them out loud each morning. They give me strength and confidence each day and enable me to live out Proverbs 3:5-6 – ***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”***

3. Is there one of the Sola statements that jumps out at you?

I have felt for years that my spiritual gift is Faith. If I had to pick one Sola statement as the one that has most impacted me it would be the word “*Alone*” in all of them. They are complete, simple, nothing to add to, or take away from, for living out your life...all for the Glory of God Alone.

One of my favorite verses is Isaiah 30:15 – “*In quietness and confidence is my strength. God alone is my help.*”

4. Can you share how God has used these in a practical way to help you live out our 4Gs (Gathering, Growing, Giving and Going)?

I have had the opportunity to share with some new neighbors and a few friends about the anniversary year of the Reformation and the book I read called *Rescuing the Gospel* by Erwin Lutzer. I love telling people how the Five Solas have influenced my life this past year.

One dear friend I shared with last summer has started to “add” things to her Christian walk - positive energy, auras, etc. I mentioned to her about the Reformation and she asked that I remind her what it said and I shared the five Solas. From that day I have prayed God would bring the Solas to the forefront of her mind daily and that she would return to only Him and to Him alone.

I see clearly the importance of our Four G’s at Edgewood because of the Five Solas. The Four G’s are our responsibility, our workhorse, of living out these Five Solas all for The Glory of God.

During the month of October I’ve been listening to some daily podcasts that feature brief biographies from the Reformation called, “*Here We Stand.*” I was very moved by one from Thursday entitled, “*The Teenage Martyr.*” Here’s part of the transcript.

Two days before Lady Jane Grey climbs the scaffold in 1554, the Catholic chaplain John Feckenham enters Jane’s cell in the Tower of London in the hopes of saving her soul. Or so he thinks.

Queen Mary (aka “Bloody Mary”) had already signed her cousin Jane’s death warrant, but she sent her seasoned chaplain to see if he could woo Jane back to Rome before her execution. Jane is about seventeen years old.

A charged debate follows...He presses that justification comes by faith *and* works; she stands her ground on *sola fide*. He asserts that the Eucharistic bread and wine are the very body and blood of Christ; she maintains that the elements symbolize Jesus' saving work. He affirms the Catholic Church's authority alongside Scripture; she insists that the church sits underneath the piercing gaze of God's word.

"I am sure we two shall never meet [again]," the chaplain finally tells Jane, implying her damnation. But Jane turns the warning back on him: *"Truth it is that we shall never meet [again], unless God turn your heart."*

Jane spent her final days preparing a brief speech for her execution and sending some last remarks. On the inside of her Greek New Testament, she wrote to her younger sister, Katharine: *"This is the book, dear sister, of the Law of the Lord. It is his testament and last will, which he bequeathed unto us wretches, which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy...And as touching my death, rejoice as I do, good sister, that I shall be delivered of this corruption, and put on incorruption. For I am assured that I shall for losing of a mortal life, win an immortal life."*

The morning of February 12 brought Jane to the wall of the central White Tower, where a small crowd and an executioner awaited her arrival. Turning to the onlookers, Jane announced, *"I do look to be saved by no other means, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ."* She then knelt and recited Psalm 51: *"Have mercy on me, O God..."*

Once blindfolded, Jane groped her way to the execution block and laid her head in its groove. The last sound the crowd heard before the axe thudded into the block was a prayer from Jane's seventeen-year-old voice: *"Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit."* So ended the life of Lady Jane Grey, the teenage martyr.

Lady Jane Grey was willing to die for the truths of the Reformation. Are we willing to live them out? If you need a reformation in your life, it's time to repent and ask Jesus to give you rebirth. If you're already a believer, then ask Him to revive you by His grace.

Let's end our service by standing with those who stood 500 years ago as we once again recite the 5 Solas as a confession of our faith.

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