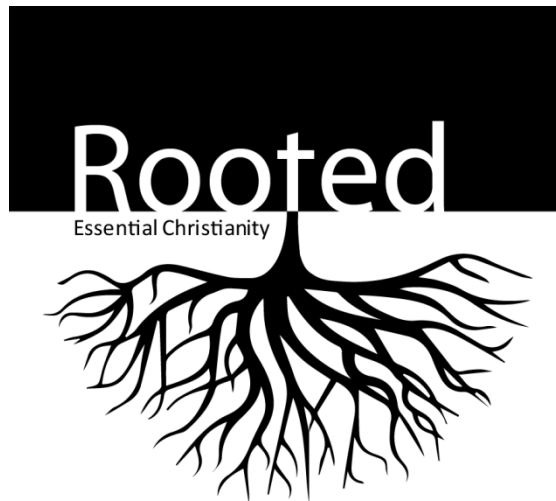




The Reformation Solas

Part 5 – Soli Deo Gloria

Psalm 79

What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

- WSC 1.1

Today churches across the globe are celebrating Reformation Sunday. We gladly join that celebration. Though there were precursors a century before like John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, the formal beginning of the Protestant Reformation is typically recognized as All Saints Day (October 31) 1517 when Martin Luther, a

young Augustinian monk, nailed a list of 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg Germany. It was a public challenge to the Church concerning its practices of indulgences and understanding of repentance.

The Five Solas of the Reformation were not composed by any of the first generation Reformers. Rather, they were composed by a later generation of theologians who sought to sum up the key Protestant distinctives which drove the Reformation project. *Sola Scriptura* addresses the chasm between Rome and Protestants regarding the issue of authority. *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, and *Solus Christus* address the chasm between Rome and Protestants over the doctrine of salvation. These are obviously first order issues which must not be compromised for any reason.

Soli Deo Gloria (for the glory of God alone) addresses such issues as church government and worship. Key to Protestantism was not the reformation of the doctrines of authority and salvation only. The Reformers were equally committed to the biblical reformation of the government of the church and the practice of worship. In these matters they rightly saw that what was at stake was the glory of God. So long as the head of the church was understood to be a man in Rome rather than Jesus Christ, the glory of God was diminished. So long as the church's worship was corrupted by unbiblical practices the glory of God was defaced.

Beyond church government and worship, *Soli Deo Gloria* may also be understood as the glue which holds the five Reformation Solas together. Throughout the Scriptures we see that God saves his people from their sins for a number of different reasons but none so great as for his own glory. God saves his people from the guilt and penalty of sin for "the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:12, 14). So we may rightly say that in Scripture Alone is revealed a salvation which is by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone, for the Glory of God Alone.

Main Idea: God saves his people from their sins for his own glory.

Psalm 79 is a lament over the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Babylon had invaded, sacked the city, murdered many of the people, and carried off many more into captivity. The psalm is most likely written from the perspective of the few left behind in the ruined city. The psalmist, lamenting over the death and destruction all around, pleads with God to forgive their sins and deliver them for the sake of His glory.

1. God's glory defined

- Glory is akin to fame in that the one who is glorious demands and is worthy of praise.

- God's glory is the open display of his perfections; the shining forth of his attributes and testimony of his works resulting in praise from all that he has made. To glorify God is to give him proper praise for all that he is and all that he has done.
- "*The glory of the Lord* is the splendor and brilliance that is inseparably associated with all of God's attributes and his self-revelation in nature and grace, the glorious form which he everywhere appears to his creatures." - Herman Bavinck

2. God's glory explained in Scripture

a) Glory as God's name.

- "Glory of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:29)
- "King of Glory" (Psalm 24:8-10)
- "God of Glory" (Psalm 29:3; Acts 7:2)
- "Father of Glory" (Acts 1:17)

b) Glory as God's reputation and worth.

- "Not to us O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory." (Psalm 115:1)
- "I will not give my glory to another." (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11)
- "...The kings of the earth will revere your glory." (Psalm 102:15)

c) God's glory revealed in the created order.

- "For what can be known about God is plain to them..." (Romans 1:19-20)
- "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19)

d) God's glory revealed in his great deeds.

God's mighty deeds of creation tell of his glory. God also judges his enemies for this glory (Exodus 14:4, 17-18; Ezek. 28:22; 39:13). However, it is through the salvation of his people that Scripture attributes to the Lord his supreme glory.

3. God's glory, our good

Isa. 60:21 - 'Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, *that I may be glorified.*'

Isa. 61:3 - 'To grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, *that He may be glorified.*

- God's commitment to his glory in no way diminishes mankind. One of the lessons learned in the garden (Genesis 3) is that when God's human creatures seek to become gods unto themselves the end result is disaster. Seeking God's glory always grants dignity and wholeness to humanity. However, man inevitably debases himself when he seeks to have for himself the glory due only to God.
- In Psalm 79 the condition of Jerusalem and the temple after the invasion of Babylon closely parallel the condition of mankind after the ravages of sin. There is nothing but death and ruin. The lament and cry for salvation are emotionally wrenching. No excuses are given by the Psalmist. There is only full acknowledgment that the disaster is due to the people's sin. This is a sign of genuine repentance. What is more, while salvation will carry with it great blessings for the people, the psalmist's first concern is that God would glorify himself in the salvation of his people. There is a perfect congruence between God being glorified and the good of his people.