

5 Solas

*saved by
Grace alone
through
Faith alone
in
Christ alone
according to
Scripture alone
for the
Glory of God alone*



Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia

St Mary's Cathedral

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

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When was the last time you received something you didn't deserve?

Read Genesis 2:15-17, 3:6-7, 20-24

What is the Lord's command to Adam and Eve?

What happens after the command is given?

How would you describe God's response to their disobedience and why?
(cf. 2:17, 3:20-24)

God's gracious actions start with Adam and Eve but then focus on their descendants of Abraham and his offspring of Israel. God's concern is to restore members of mankind to know and enjoy him in all his glory again. God calls Israel to know his favour out of all the nations of the Earth:

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-11

How is Israel described here?

Why did the Lord set them apart for himself?

How is the Lord's character described?

God shows Israel amazing grace in saving them from harsh slavery and drawing them to himself as their good master. They are called to obey Him in response to his absolute faithfulness; he shows steadfast love to those whom he has saved. But the Lord knew that Israel would be stubborn in their sin and spurn him rather than enjoy the blessing of his rule. Eventually they cast out of God's land and sent into slavery again for their sin.

But see what God says to his people under judgement:

Read Ezekiel 34:25-31

What does God promise to do?

In what sense does this mean restoration for Israel?

What will Israel know as a result?

How do we see God's grace here?

God promised Israel a restoration in terms they were familiar with but the reality would be far greater; one in which the curse of sin that keeps us from God would be vanquished so that we can know him as our heavenly Father both now and forevermore.

Read Ephesians 2:1-7 in small groups

What do these verses say about our past as Christians?

What do they say about our present as Christians?

How did God accomplish this for us?

What application does Paul drive home for us in v8-9?

Think It Through

In what ways do we behave as though we're not saved by God's grace alone?

Why is it so vital that we continue trusting in God's grace alone to save us?

Surely God saves those who do good by him; how would you respond?



*What do world religions say about how a person can be right with God or receive God's blessing? How is that different to Christianity?
(you might like to consider Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Mormonism...)*

To be justified means to be 'declared righteous' in God's sight. It means being in a right relationship with him and no longer under his judgement. It is a term taken from the law court. If the judge says you are guilty, that means you are 'condemned'. If a judge says you are not guilty it means you are 'justified'.

Read Galatians 2:15-3:14

What does this passage say about how we CAN and CANNOT be justified?
Why?

If we try to be right with God through our works, what do we prove?
(2:17-18) What will happen to us? (3:10)

If being right with God depended in any way on our works, how would this make the death of Jesus meaningless? (2:21) What would it say about the death of Jesus? (cf. Romans 3:13-15)

Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 3:11-20

What is the natural human state?

How does this help us understand why we cannot be saved by works?

What would you say to the person who said that “faith was a work”?
(Ephesians 2:8-10)?

Think back on all the passages we’ve read so far. Do they teach that we can be saved by “faith AND works”, or is it by “faith ALONE”? Why?

Read James 2:14-26

James specifically says that “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”. Does this contradict what Paul says? Why or why not?

(you might like to read Ephesians 2:8-10 & Romans 6:1-4 to see the relationship between faith & works in Paul’s writings).

What then is the relationship between faith and works?

“We’re saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone”. Does this accurately capture the Bible’s teaching?

Think It Through

What things are we sometimes tempted to rely on to earn our salvation instead of Christ?

What might be the symptoms that we’re beginning to relying on works for salvation instead of faith alone in Christ alone?

What would you say to a new Christian who thought that because we are saved only by faith in Jesus alone, it does not matter much what we do now?

If salvation depends on faith alone and not works, how does that give me assurance I will be saved? (cf. 1 John 5:13)

Paul says in Romans 3:27-28 that the truth of faith alone means that we cannot boast.

Instead of boasting what might be an appropriate response to God?

How might this alter the way we relate to other people or think about our service in church?

Prayer

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Thank God that we do not need to earn our way to heaven. Pray that we would never rely on our works for salvation but trust entirely on Jesus. Pray that we would live by faith in Christ, who died for us, and be thankful to him instead of boasting in ourselves.

Appendix: Sola Fide In The 39 Articles

XI. OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN.

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.

XII. OF GOOD WORKS.

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.



If you died tonight, would you be acceptable to God? Why, or why not?

Read Hebrew 7:23-8:2

The book of Hebrews is like a commentary on the Old Testament priestly service. By comparison and contrast, the author shows us how Christ's ministry is far better than the former priesthood.

In the Old Testament, why did the people need a priest? (Lev 16:30-34)

Use the following table to see how Jesus' priesthood is different from the former priesthood.

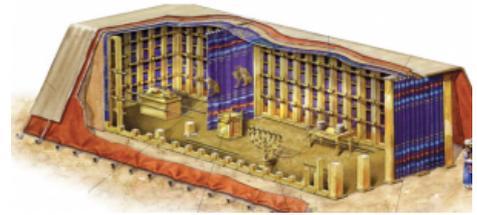
	Former Priest(s)	Jesus Christ
Number of priests	v.23	
Frequency of sacrifices	v27	v27
Type of sacrifice	v27	v27
Place of service		v2
Alive or dead	v23	v25
Able to intercede		v25
Able to save		v25

The author of Hebrews explains that the former priesthood was only a “copy and shadow” of Christ’s true priestly service – a service which is “much more excellent”.

Use the table to explain *why* Jesus’ ministry is better, and why he alone is able to save us.

Read Hebrews 9:1-15

In v1-6, the author describes a tent called the tabernacle – this was the place for priestly service in the Old Testament. This tent had two main sections; the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, as shown on the right.



Answer the following questions about the priestly ministry during the Old Testament (v7):

Who could enter the Most Holy Place?

How often could he enter?

What did he need to do so?

Why was this necessary?

Why was this ministry inadequate? (v9)

In contrast, answer the following questions about Christ's ministry:

Where did Jesus perform his ministry? (v11)

How often did he enter? (v12a)

What was the means of his entry? (v12b)

What did he achieve? (v12c)

What do you think is meant by the phrase "blood of Christ" in this context?

What does the word 'sufficient' mean?

According to the author, is the ministry of Christ – and his blood sacrifice – sufficient for:

securing our eternal redemption?

purifying our conscience from dead works to a life of service?

redeeming us from transgressions against God's law?

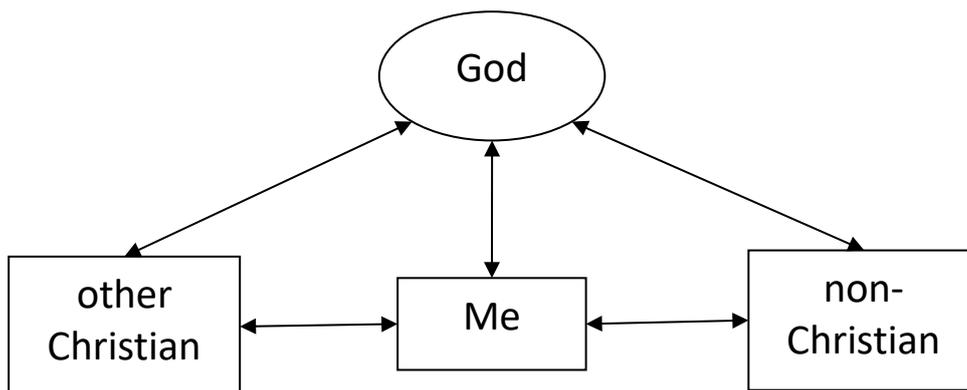
Hence, if the ministry of Christ is sufficient for these things, can we add anything to it?

Therefore, if we trust in ourselves (or anything else) for our redemption, what must we believe about Jesus and his work?

Read Hebrews 10:11-25

In v21-25, the author gives three exhortations (“let us..”) in light of our confidence. Identify what these are, and explain how they flow from Christ’s completed work.

Consider the diagram below, which illustrates our relationship with God and other people. In the light of Christ’s priestly work, explain how we can relate to God, how we ought to relate to other Christians, and why we should love and evangelize non-Christians.



Appendix: Solus Christus In The 39 Articles

XXXI. OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST FINISHED UPON THE CROSS

THE Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.

Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

XVIII. OF OBTAINING ETERNAL SALVATION ONLY BY THE NAME OF CHRIST

They also are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out to us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.



Scripture alone (from the Reformation slogan Sola Scriptura) is the teaching that Scripture is the Church's only infallible and sufficient rule for deciding issues of faith and practices that involve doctrines. While the Bible does not contain all knowledge, it does contain that which is necessary for salvation. Indeed, if something is not found in Scripture, it is not binding upon the believer. This view does not deny that the Church has the authority to teach God's Word. Furthermore, while tradition is valuable, it but must be tested by the higher authority of the Scriptures.

Sola Scriptura "does not mean that the Reformers rejected everything that every Christian in earlier ages has said: indeed, they often cited the early Christians as supporters of their own positions. However, they recognized that those earlier believers were not inspired, were not inerrant, and, in fact, quite often made errors in their judgments and beliefs, just as people do today. The only infallible rule of faith, they argued, is found in the pages of Holy Writ." [1]

In all of this, the role of the Holy Spirit is vital. The Word can only be received and obeyed by the Holy Spirit.¹

¹ <http://www.theopedia.com/sola-scriptura>

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

What does it mean that all Scripture is 'God breathed'?

What is it useful for?

Does Scripture tell us everything we need to know to be saved? Does Scripture tell us everything we know to be godly? On what basis can you answer that?

How then should we treat the Scriptures?

Read Matthew 15:1-9

What did the Pharisees and scribes accuse Jesus of?

What was Jesus' response?

How does Jesus distinguish between the word of God and human tradition? Which has more authority? Why?

What other 'competitors' for authority might we see today? How should they relate to the authority of Scripture? (After doing this, you may want to review how the 39 Articles treat the Scriptures.)

In what ways may we be tempted to undermine the authority of Scripture today (individually and/or in churches) ? How can we help each other hold fast to the Bible's ultimate authority?

Appendix: Sola Scriptura In The 39 Articles

Notice how the 39 articles , following the example of Jesus and the apostles, always treat God's word as the ultimate authority.

VI. OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION

HOLY Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

VIII. OF THE THREE CREEDS

THE Three Creeds, *Nicene Creed*, *Athanasius's Creed*, and that which is commonly called the *Apostles' Creed*, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: **for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.**

XIX. OF THE CHURCH

THE visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

As the Church of *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*, have erred; so also the Church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

XX. OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

THE Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet **it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.**

Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

XXI. OF THE AUTHORITY OF GENERAL COUNCILS

GENERAL Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. **Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.**

XXII. OF PURGATORY

THE Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping, and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather **repugnant to the Word of God.**

XXIV. OF SPEAKING IN THE CONGREGATION IN SUCH A TONGUE AS THE PEOPLE UNDERSTANDETH

IT is a thing plainly **repugnant to the Word of God**, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have publick Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.

XXXIV. OF THE TRADITIONS OF THE CHURCH

IT is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that **nothing be ordained against God's Word.** Whosoever through his private judgement, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.

Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.



In a world where ultimately one thing takes priority over another, what do you feel is the ultimate priority?

Read Romans 9:1-33

What's the topic that Paul is dealing with in this passage? Why is it an important topic?

Overall, does it seem that people are the centre of the universe in this passage? If not, why not? (See also Exodus 14)

How does Pharaoh serve God's glory?

How does saving people for eternity serve God's glory?

Read Isaiah 42-44

How does God speak about his glory? What serves it, and what vindicates it?

Read Revelation 5:1-14

How does Revelation show the climax of the vindication of God's glory?

Read Leviticus 10:1-3

What happened to Aaron's sons? Why? What does verse 3 mean?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 & 1 Peter 4:1-11

How does this doctrine shape the way we live?

Romans 1:18-32

How does God's glory relate to judgement in this passage?

Other references to look up, if you have time:

John 17:24, 1 Timothy 1:17, Ephesians 3:21, Romans 11:3

How would you summarise what the Bible teaches about all glory being to God?

Think It Through

In what ways might people misunderstand all glory being to God?

What are the consequences of not understanding this teaching?

How might you explain this doctrine to a child, in a simple way?

How should all glory being to God shape your life, in practical daily ways?