

Gospel, the Five Solas and Solid Ground

Introduction

In Gal 1:8-9, Paul uses strong language against preaching a false gospel. So, we need to examine what is a false gospel.

Gal 1:8-9 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

Let us start with the Reformation that began in 1517 AD by Martin Luther. Later, John Calvin and others supported him. They protested against the excesses of the doctrine of salvation that the Roman Catholic Church was preaching in those days. Eventually, they left the Catholic Church and began what is now called the Protestant group of churches. The heart of this division was not merely a theological dispute. The reformers believed that the false teachings robbed the gospel of its power to save humanity. The reformers were willing to lay down their lives to preserve the gospel truth. They insisted that because Scripture is God's inspired word, it is the church's only inerrant, sufficient, and final authority. And from Scripture flows the essential doctrines of salvation. Over time, they formulated the expression known as the Five Solas: salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone, based upon the teaching of Scripture alone. "Sola" in Latin means "alone". The Five Solas represent a good biblical declaration of the true gospel. And any addition besides the word "alone" would be a false gospel.

Outline:

1. Sola Scriptura Scripture alone
2. Sola Fide Faith alone
3. Sola Gratia Grace alone
4. Solus Christus Christ alone
5. Soli Deo Gloria Glory of God alone
6. Solid Ground On which we stand

1. Sola scriptura (Scripture alone)

It emphasises that God inspired the authors of the Bible. God's word is, therefore, inerrant and sufficient. (2 Tim 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*). *Sola Scriptura* teaches us that all other authorities in the Christian life serve underneath Scripture. At the same time, Scripture alone rules over other sources. We must reject anything taught by any Christian teacher that contradicts the Bible.

2. Sola gratia (Grace alone)

It emphasises grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done in Jesus Christ rather than what we do. *Eph 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, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

We cannot base our salvation on God's grace **and** good moral behaviour because we all sinned and need a Saviour. Rom 3:23-24 says, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”*.

3. Sola fide (Faith alone)

It emphasises that salvation is a gift by God given to all who accept it through faith alone. (*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*). This faith is a repentant faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. It includes belief in the Lordship of Jesus that causes us to turn from our way and turn to Jesus as the Lord of our life. Salvation is not based on faith and human effort, faith and good deeds, faith and water baptism, or faith and church membership (*Eph 2:8-9*) — but salvation is through faith alone.

What is this type of faith, which many call saving faith? It has three vital components. (i) you must know the gospel truth, (ii) you must believe the gospel truth, (iii) you must trust your whole life in the truth.

The gospel truth is that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became fully man to live the life we should have lived but didn't. Then Jesus died on the cross on our behalf to pay the full punishment for our sins against a Holy God, which we couldn't. Then He rose again from the dead, having satisfied the justice of a Holy God. People with faith in what Jesus did for them will stand fully justified before the Holy God, regardless of their moral or immoral past. Being fully justified means God will completely forgive a person's past, present and future sins and see in that person the perfect life that Jesus lived on their behalf. Therefore, that believing person will have eternal life in fellowship with God.

Every person believes and *trusts* (or has faith) in something that gives them security and significance. To trust in Jesus alone is to turn from what gives you security and significance and **turn only to Jesus** — to provide you with security and significance. It is also called **repentant** faith because it causes you to turn from whatever is lord in your life and turn to Jesus as your only Lord.

- The rich young man found security and significance in his great wealth, and he couldn't turn to Jesus for security and significance (Matt 19:16-24)
- Religious people find significance and prestige in their moral behaviour and social standing. They love the praise of men more than God, and it made the cost of following Jesus too much for them (John 12:43, Luke 16:15)

But when you put your trust in Jesus alone, the security Jesus gives you is eternal security with Him. The significance Jesus gives is that you become a child of God, brought into His own family. It means God loves you the same as He loves His Eternal Son.

4. Solus Christus (Christ alone)

It emphasises the role of Jesus Christ alone in our salvation. We are saved by Christ alone.

Jesus alone is the King of kings — Rev 19:16 *On his robe, and on his thigh, he has this name written: king of king and Lord of lords.*

He alone is our High Priest — Heb 4:14 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*

He alone is our Redeemer — Gal 3:13 *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).*

He alone is the sole Mediator between God and man — 1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*

Any attempt to give these roles to someone else or share in those roles (such as Mary) is improper. Salvation is not in Christ and Church or not in Christ and anybody else. It is Jesus Christ alone who saves.

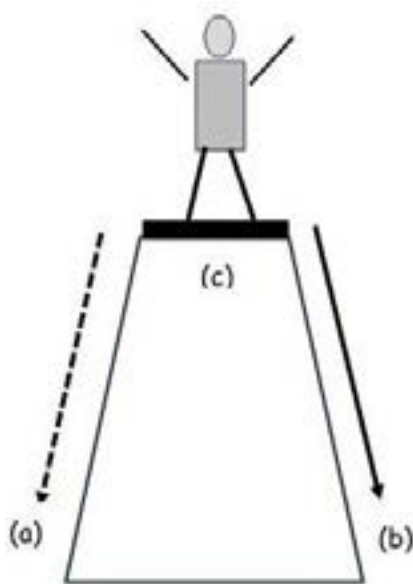
5. Soli Deo gloria (Glory of God alone)

God will receive all the glory only if our salvation is by grace alone. If there is something of our own that we can claim, then we no longer boast in Christ alone. But if *He is the author and perfecter of our faith* (Heb 12:2), He alone will be magnified for His sovereign grace. As Christians, these **five Solas** should help us grow in humility, dependence and trust in God. Whether we work in a secular or Church job, to God alone is the glory.

Eph 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

6. Standing Firm on Solid Ground.

Gal 5:1,4-6 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery...⁴ You who are trying to be justified by the Law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.



When we know (understand) the gospel as expressed in the five Solas and believe and trust our lives on it, we stand on the unshakable ground of Jesus' love for us. Then nothing can separate us from His love. But in Gal 5:1, Paul says we must **stand firm** in the freedom that Christ has set us free. Why the necessity to stand firm? Because though we cannot lose our salvation, we can quickly move towards (a) legalism or (b) careless living. And in either case, we will fall from the grace that makes us stand firm in freedom and cause us to lose our intimacy with Jesus. God gives us grace that brings salvation and teaches us to say "No" to unrighteousness (Titus 2:11). We stand firm in this grace — the solid ground (c) on which we stand.

Christ has set us free from the Law of sin and death (*Rom 8:2 because through Christ Jesus, the Law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the Law of sin and death*). Not obedience to any set of laws makes us more acceptable to Jesus. He accepts us only because of His grace. He died for us because He loves us. It is in this truth that we put our trust (faith). Legalistic people still think that we must do something to be more acceptable to Him, so they fall from grace.

Gal 2:15 We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles

Paul calls Christians from the Jewish background “the **circumcised**”. These Jewish Christians were trained from birth to obey the Law (Gal 2:15). Paul was one of them, faultless in following it (Phil 3:5-6). However, they committed “**hidden internal sins**” like pride, arrogance, selfishness and covetousness.

Paul calls Christians who came from Gentile backgrounds “the **uncircumcised**”. Most came from a loose moral lifestyle (Gal 2:15). They committed “**external sins**” visible to everyone, like adultery, financial corruption, etc. But whether a person commits internal or external sins—we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. We all need salvation. So whether you are circumcised or uncircumcised, it has no value to your salvation. And the only saviour is Jesus. And the only thing that counts is your faith in Jesus as Saviour (Gal 5:6).

Paul tells the circumcised Jewish Christians to stand firm in their freedom and not insist that the uncircumcised Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey Jewish laws to have faith in Jesus. If they emphasised circumcision, their faith is not entirely in the grace of Jesus. (*Gal 5:6 In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*).

Since we have this freedom, does it mean we can live as we please and continue in sinful ways as before? No, says Paul. Jesus has set you **free from slavery to sin** to live in righteousness. (*Rom 8:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*). And the motivation to live a righteous life comes only because of your faith in Jesus, who loved you first and to whom you respond in loving Him (Gal 5:6).

You will hear Him calling you to draw near when you meditate on the risen Lord, knowing He died on the cross out of love. And as you draw near to Him, His love transforms you (2 Cor 3:18). On His Second Coming, you will see Him face to face and be like Him. You are glorified.

Song of Songs 2:14 [Jesus says to you] My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

John 4:19 We love because He first loved.

Cor 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

And this, my dear friends, is our hope — the joyful expectation of certainty — that we will see Him face to face one day and become like Him. It purifies us (1 John 3:2-3). We will be glorified (Gal 5:5). This is this solid ground today on which we stand by grace alone.