

# The Five Solas

These five statements sum up what lies at the heart of Protestant belief:

[By Grace alone \(Sola Gratia\)](#)  
[Through Faith alone \(Sola Fide\)](#)  
[In Christ alone \(Solus Christus\)](#)  
[According to Scripture alone \(Sola Scriptura\)](#)  
[For God's Glory alone \(Soli Deo Gloria\)](#)

## 1. Sola Gratia (Grace alone)

Salvation is the free gift of God to man. It is given by God's Grace alone and not through any merit on the part of the Christian.

GRACE = **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense.

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*  
Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV).

The importance of this doctrine in Protestant theology was underlined by Martin Luther, in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* :

*"If the Pope would concede that God alone by His grace through Christ justifies sinners, we would carry him in our arms, we would kiss his feet."*

## 2. Sola Fide (Faith alone)

We are judged righteous in the sight of God purely on the basis of our faith. The atoning sacrifice of Christ leads to righteousness being imputed to us as sinners through a legal declaration by God. This is often stated as *Justification by faith alone*. There is a clear distinction between **Justification** and **Sanctification**, the latter being the growth in holiness arising from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.

FAITH = **F**orsaking **A**ll **I** **T**rust **H**im.

*"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith."*  
Galatians 3:11 (KJV).

Commenting on Justification in his writings, Martin Luther argued that:

*"This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification, is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness."*

Luther discovers the Sola fide doctrine at Erfurt

### 3. Solus Christus (Christ alone)

Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and our salvation is accomplished only through His death and resurrection.

*“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”*  
1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV).

In addition, every believer is a priest before God, with immediate access to him for the forgiveness of sins. This is known as the doctrine of the *Priesthood of all believers*. It was classically articulated by Martin Luther, but Protestants point to 1 Peter 2:9 as evidence of support for the doctrine:

*“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*  
1 Peter 2:9 (KJV).

The doctrine is not unique to Protestantism, being also found in the Roman Catholic Church, for example, but Protestants insist that no other special form of Priesthood is necessary, as opposed to the Catholic view of a ministerial priesthood being required for the administration of the Sacraments and forgiveness of sins.

### 4. Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone)

Scripture alone is the only infallible source of divine revelation and the final authority for matters of faith and practice. *Sola Scriptura* does not mean that all truth is contained in the Bible (for example the Nicene Creed is widely accepted and recited within orthodox Christianity), but rather that all mankind needs to know for salvation is contained within its pages.

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*  
2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV).

*“For concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures.”*  
Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 4:17)

Protestants typically argue that scripture is *perspicuous* or clear to all people regarding the essential truths of the Christian gospel of salvation. In contrast to the Roman Catholic view of a Magisterium (or teaching office) of the church, which is required to infallibly interpret scripture; Protestants argue that through the Holy Spirit, individuals can, by themselves interpret the scriptures responsibly.

## **5. Soli Deo Gloria** (To the glory of God alone)

Every aspect of the Christian life is to be seen as giving glory to God. In essence, this summarises the other four *Soli* above. It also stemmed from the reformers opposition to what they perceived as the unwarranted glorification of the Popes and other clergy.

*“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

1 Peter 4:11 (KJV).