

### The 5 Solas: Soli Deo Gloria

**Romans 11:33 ESV (Pg. 552)** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! **34** “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” **35** “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” **36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

- I. The first 11 chapters of the book of Romans represents one of the Bible’s most thorough explanations of God’s salvation given to humankind through Jesus.
  - A. It shows how all people, both Jew and Gentile, are separated from God because of their sin, and entirely without excuse. It explains how God’s wrath is revealed in judgement against all people because of this fallen condition.
  - B. But it also details how God revealed his goodness toward the human race by Jesus’ death, and how he imputes his righteousness by faith to all who believe.
  - C. Paul tells us how grace is enough for both the original sin we inherited from Adam, as well as the sinful actions and attitudes we fight with everyday. Grace has even triumphed over the righteous accusatory power of the law of God.
  - D. He speaks of how God has engineered a new kind of life for us through the power of the Holy Spirit, stating that nothing can separate us from God’s love.
  - E. He goes on to tell of God’s current and future redemptive plans for the Jews and the Gentiles before spending the last 5 chapters giving practical, gospel-centered instructions touching many concerns for the Roman believers.
- II. But tucked in between the rich theology of the first 11 chapters and the practical wisdom of the last 5, we find the stunning doxology that we read as our text. After detailing all of these amazing truths about what God has done by Jesus, Paul steps back from his writing, and is reverently compelled to offer praise to the Lord.
  - A. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”, he cries. He describes the mind of God (his wisdom and knowledge) as riches, and stands amazed at the depth of that wealth. This is an important reminder to us all.
    1. No matter how much wealth of wisdom you think resides in the world of academia, science, philosophy, entertainment, technology, or religion, the wisdom of God makes it all look like utter poverty. If human wisdom attains the height of Mount Everest, God’s exceeds the edges of the universe.
      - a) **Isaiah 55:8 ESV** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
      - b) This wisdom is revealed in the redemption of humankind Paul has just described. His response to God’s salvation is humbled, awestruck worship. Why is our response so often indifference and familiarity?
    2. “How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
      - a) None of us are capable of the thoughts of Jesus. His decisions are “unsearchable”. Our solutions to our problems are laughably inferior to what Jesus Christ has done for us through his cross.

- b) God's ways are "inscrutable", meaning Google and Texas Tech are of no help to you in understanding God. Inscrutable means "past finding out".
    - 3. Without the help of God's Word and Spirit, we would never have seen what he's done in human history, or known where he was ultimately going with it. He "slam dunks" this point, quoting Isaiah 40:13, "God has no counselor".
  - B. "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" He then quotes Job 41:11, to show God's self-existence. People talk about "standing on the shoulders of giants" when they succeed. But God owes no credit to anyone for what he is or has. All he gives, he gives because of mercy, not debt.
  - C. Paul concludes his doxology with with a summation of who God essentially is: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." "Amen" means "I agree" or "so be it" or "this is truth".
- III. Today we wrap up our series on the 5 Solas: the 5 doctrinal affirmations of the church. We discussed Scripture alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, and Faith Alone. Today we focus on the last great guiding truth. "**Soli Deo Gloria**". This is Latin for "to God alone be the glory". This was a battle cry of the reformation, because the Catholic Church elevated the church's human agents (popes and bishops, etc.), and required members to contribute to their salvation by good works.
- A. But no human is worthy of honor for dispensing the gift of grace on people. If we believe we helped God save us by being good, then we deserve a small corner of his throne. But Revelation paints a much different picture indeed...
    - 1. **Revelation 4:9 ESV** And whenever the living creatures give **glory** and **honor** and **thanks** to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and **worship him** who lives forever and ever. **They cast their crowns before the throne**, saying, **11 "Worthy are you**, our Lord and God, **to receive glory and honor and power**, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."
    - 2. The consuming passion of both the heavenly beings and the redeemed humans around God's throne is his glory, never their own. The elders have crowns, but they only cast them away from themselves towards God's feet!
  - B. Before we analyze the meaning of this final verse of Paul's doxology in Romans 11, let's better define a few key and helpful terms; worthy, worship, and glory.
    - 1. "Worthy" and "Worship" share a common root word: **worth**. We understand that word primarily from economics; worth is comparative value.
      - a) One of my hobbies is collecting vinyl records, mostly from the 50's through the 70's. I have about 450 albums, and some that are worth some money. I really enjoy building my collection and listening to music.
      - b) But I want to make a deal. If any of you have a sealed copy of the Beatle's 1968 "White Album" with a low production number, I will trade all of my records to you for it today, with absolutely no questions asked.
    - 2. Why would I trade 450 records for one? Because that one is **worth** 5 figures! All of mine combined aren't worth a fraction of that one. That is what it means that God is worthy! His worth is far beyond anything we

- could ever trade for him! Everything else in creation by comparison (even the White Album!) is only worth casting at his feet or throwing in the fire!
- a) To worship God is to give him the reverence and adoration his worthiness demands. If we understood God's value, we wouldn't have to work ourselves up to this. No one has to be ordered to stand in awe before the Grand Canyon. What it obligates our wonder and respect.
  - b) Similarly, Glory is the quality in God whereby his worth is measured and that makes worship the natural response to knowing or seeing him.
- C. In Romans, Paul uses 3 words to promote God's singular worthiness in his own saving work. He says that "**from** him, **through** him, and **to** him are all things". He concludes that because of this, God is worthy of glory forever.
1. In every facet of God that scripture reveals, we see this trifold reality of from him, through him, and to him. Take his work of creation for example...
    - a) Paul's frame of reference is "all things", meaning nothing at all can exist outside of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Things tangible like trees, stars and animals, to things intangible like truth and virtue. All originate with God. In this sense, all things are **from** God, as Paul clearly states.
    - b) But he also says that all things come **through** God. This means that God is not only the architect of the universe who drew up the blueprints, but the construction worker who put it together by his mighty Word as well. He employed no angels to do the work, he did it all himself.
    - c) So creation issued forth **from** the mind of God, and through his creative activity, but **to** what end? All of creation exists for the purpose of bringing glory and worship **to** God, of such he alone is worthy!
  2. In Revelation 5, after the residents in heaven praise Jesus, the worthy Lamb of God, a praise service erupts. And who is it participating in that service?
    - a) **Revelation 5:13 ESV** And I heard **every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them**, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be **blessing and honor and GLORY and might forever and ever!**"
    - b) All creation exists to bring God glory, and while some now resist and even refuse, they day will come when (willingly or unwillingly) their resistance will be shattered and every tongue will give God glory!
- IV. Now, Paul's concern in Romans is clearly the redemption of humanity by God. How is the truth of the gospel shown as from God, through God, and to God?
- A. The gospel is from God in a couple of ways. First (as already indicated), he is the origin of everything! But we also see this in the garden, right after Adam and Eve fell to the serpent's temptation. They fallen creatures aren't crying out for pardon. they're resigned to condemnation, cursed in a fallen world!
1. But in Genesis 3:15, God promises a remedy is coming to fix the broken world they've made for themselves. **He initiated a rescue** they did not request! The serpent's head would be crushed and his power broken!
  2. Yet God's remedy didn't begin in the garden, but before creation itself!
    - a) **Ephesians 1:3 ESV** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly places, **4** even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5 he predestined us for adoption** to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to **the purpose of his will**, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

- b) God chose us first, before he created anything, and he exercised his will to predestining that you and I would be part of his family forever! In multiple places, the Bible says “Salvation is of (or from) the Lord!”
- B. The gospel of redemption and salvation is not just from God, but also **through** him. It was God the Son who gave his life so that we might be saved. No one else could have done it, and no one else was volunteering! But Jesus (who is God!) laid down his life so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God.
  - 1. Salvation is through God, because what the Father planned, the Son accomplished on the cross, and the Holy Spirit applies daily, calling sinners to believe and repent, and sanctifying those who have believed.
  - 2. **1 Peter 1:3 ESV** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- C. But the fact that salvation is from God’s heart, and through his working isn’t all. God has saved us **to** receive glory and praise for himself. The first 3 chapters of Ephesians illustrate this very well.
  - 1. 1:3 says that God’s predestination of us was to “the praise of his glorious grace”. God chose us so that he would receive praise for his great grace!
    - a) 1:12 says that we have been given an inheritance by God “for the praise of his glory”. 1:14 says we have been given the Holy Spirit as a downpayment on that inheritance “to the praise of his glory”.
    - b) 2:7 says that we have been given grace “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” God wants his saving of us to result in future praise!
    - c) 3:10 says that God actually made Paul a minister of the gospel so that his manifold wisdom might be made known, not just to humanity, but as a testimony to principalities and powers in heavenly places as well. He wants all creation to see the glory of his grace bestowed on us!
    - d) God’s no narcissist! If I elevate myself, it’s unhelpful and deceitful. I can never be the answer you need. But if God does not promote his own glory, he is withholding what is most beneficial to you, so 3:16 says that the riches of God’s glory are the source for our spiritual strength.
  - 2. Concluding these thoughts, Paul says in 3:20-21 what God does for our benefit should ultimately bring him glory.
- D. Whether in creation, redemption, or anything else God chooses to do, let him receive glory alone! May we all cast our crowns at his feet and stand in awe-filled wonder and worship! May his glory humble us and strengthen us, break

- us and heal us, kill our pride and save our souls, cause us to reverently fear and triumphantly rejoice in his great power and Name! **Soli Deo Gloria!**
- V. For some, especially in church, the glory of God may seem like a given. But we should be cautious, lest in our self-centeredness, we fail to honor God as his Word reveals him to be, dethroning him in our hearts by default.
- A. Daniel 4 records the story of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar standing on his roof, and admiring the vast kingdom and wealth that had formed around his leadership.
1. With pride, he says, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"
  2. But even as the words were in his mouth, a reply comes from heaven. "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."
    - a) Just as God decreed. Nebuchadnezzar goes crazy, living in the field, eating grass. His hair grows like eagles feathers, his nails like bird's claws and his body is daily soaked by the rain and dew.
    - b) When God's judgement was done, Nebuchadnezzar is given a moment of clarity, and he responds in humility. **Daniel 4:34b ESV I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever. God restored him after proving Who alone was worthy of glory.**
- B. When we ascribe glory to earthly things (especially ourselves), we become earthy, more animal-like. We fight for control, responding to every passion.
- C. But when we are committed to the glory of the transcendent God, he raises us up with him to heavenly places, and he does so when we're enthroned and blessed in life, but also when we're sick, persecuted discouraged, or in prison.
- D. This is what makes the "soli" in Soli Deo Gloria so important. Most Christians have the "deus gloria" part down. We're glad to give God all the glory, as long as we get some of the credit. But to give God ALONE the glory is the pathway to joy, blessing, soundness of thought, health of emotions, and intimate experience of God. It is a fight, but one worth fighting.
- VI. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- VII. Benediction: **Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.