

To the Glory of God Alone – sola Deo gloria –

Selected Scriptures - NCBC, October 22, 2017

Main Point: **The glory of God is the supreme and ultimate purpose for all things.**

- The 5 “Solas” of the Protestant Reformation
 - On the authority of Scripture alone
 - Through faith alone
 - By grace alone
 - In Christ alone
 - For the glory of God alone
- The glory of God is the name and fame of God
 - The many perfections of God’s holiness
 - The revelation of God through His creation, salvation, judgment, & visions
- The glory of God is the central theme of Scripture
 - The pillar of cloud & fire
 - The God-Man dwelling with us
 - The glorification of the redeemed

Application: **Aim your entire life to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

Opening Announcements:

Women’s Refresh Event – Nov 3rd 6-8:30pm

<<A Mighty Fortress is our God>>



The German Reformer Martin Luther wrote some 36 hymns, but the one we’ve just sung is certainly his most well-known. It is a paraphrase of **Psalm 46** – a celebration of God’s sovereignty and the secure hope believers possess by faith in Jesus alone.¹

Singing this bold statement of faith together is a fitting way for us to worship God as we celebrate the 500 year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation this October 31, 2017 – exactly 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenburg, Germany.

Please prepare now for the public reading of Scripture from **Ephesians chapter 1**.

¹ <https://www.challies.com/articles/hymn-stories-a-mighty-fortress-is-our-god/>

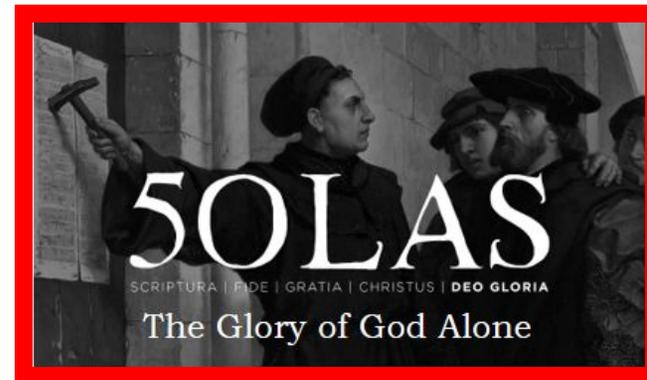


If you don't have a Bible with you, please raise your hand as our men are coming to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

We have partnered together with 5 other local churches to preach a total of 6 different sermons in this Reformation Celebration – focusing on the 5 “solas” or key theological conclusions of the Protestant Reformation.



Pastor Scott Boerckel from East White Oak Bible Church is preaching on the authority of *Scripture Alone*. Pastor Daniel Bennett from Bethany Community Church will be in our pulpit next Sunday preaching on *Faith Alone*. Pastor Ritch Boerckel from Bethany Baptist Church is preaching on *Grace Alone*. Pastor Art Georges from Living Hope Community Church is preaching on *Christ Alone*. Pastor Kendall Coffman from Lexington Community Church is preaching on the continued call to reformation for all of us. And today, I have the privilege of preaching a message on *The Glory of God Alone*.



We will hear both my sermon and Pastor Daniel's sermon next week live. The other four messages of this reformation series will be available on our website next month.

I pray this study and all the podcasts and recommended resources that we have been sharing with you this month invigorates your faith. Our past is not our master – but it is a worthy teacher. It is good for the modern church to

look back and remember God's faithfulness to His people – even through the darkness of 500 years ago.

Please stand with me in honor of God's Word as I read from **Ephesians chapter 1**, starting in **verse 3**:

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

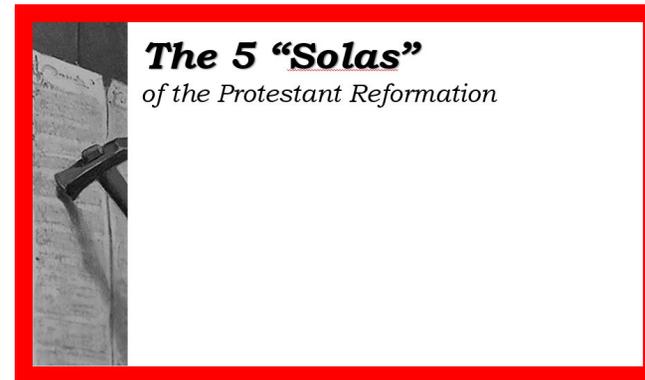
¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

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Before we launch into our study of the Glory of God this morning, let's briefly summarize,



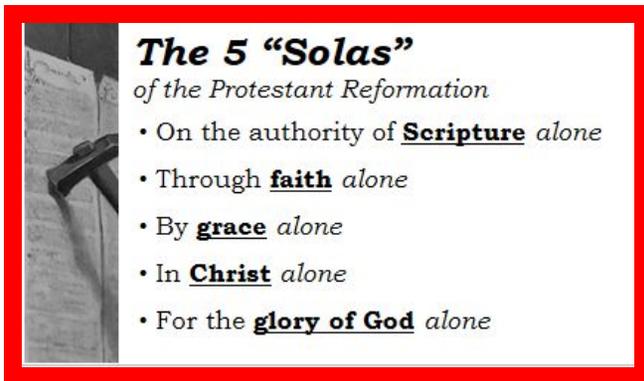
The 5 “Solas” of the Protestant Reformation

The word, “Sola,” is Latin for “alone” or “only.” These five “Solas” served as foundational principles of the Reformation.² They summarize the beliefs of the Protestant Reformers about the essence of Christianity.

The Reformers had two chief concerns: How is a person made right with God? And based on what authority? 500 years ago, this debate over salvation and authority was brought to a head between Rome and the Reformers. These 5 “Solas” are central to salvation and authority, showing how we can live eternally with God and know that God is forever for us.

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/what-are-the-five-solas> is an excellent summary of each of the 5 “Solas” of the Reformation! Highly recommend.

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The Reformers believed that Scripture alone was the final, decisive authority for understanding and defending how a person can be made right with God. The Roman church was not the final authority – the magisterium was not the final authority. The Pope was not the final authority. **Scripture alone** is the ultimate authority for life and doctrine.³

Freedom from sin’s guilt and deserving wrath – could only be received **through faith alone**. Salvation could not be earned through some religious work or human merit. The Bible taught salvation came **by grace alone**, meaning that it was not by man’s decision,⁴ or by man’s ability⁵ that he would receive salvation. As **Ephesians 2, verse 8** clearly teaches, *by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

³ 2 Peter 1:3

⁴ John 1:13

⁵ Romans 8:7-8; c.f. 1 Corinthians 2:14

A person was justified and made right by God **in Christ alone**. The basis of a person’s salvation is not in some treasury of merit that was bestowed upon a person by the church or some saint. The basis of our salvation is Jesus Christ’s finished work – alone.

The Protestant understanding of what the Scriptures taught about salvation was entirely aimed at bringing **glory to God alone**. The Reformers argued the Scriptures allowed no grounds of boasting for believers. God’s salvation of sinners is not primarily about us or for us – but for His glory alone. As **Psalm 115:1** so powerfully proclaims – *Not to us, not to us – but to Your Name be the glory!*

So as we turn our attention to soli Deo gloria – the one Sola that is the very heart and substance of the other four – we appreciate the Reformer’s conviction that,

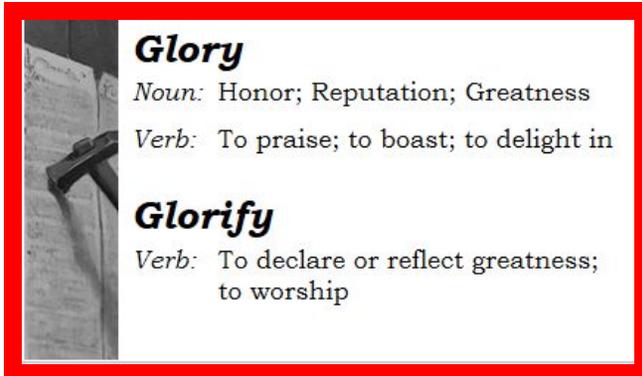


the glory of God is the supreme and ultimate purpose for all things.

And this premise is what I seek to argue through the rest of our study of God's Word this morning together.

While this topic deserves far more time and ability than I'm able to give ... I pray that we will all leave today with a greater appreciation for this astounding and exhilarating truth: The glory of God is the supreme and ultimate purpose for all things.

Let's start now with some basic definitions.



As a noun, the word *glory* means “honor; reputation; or greatness.” *To glory* in something as a verb, means “to praise, or to boast, or to delight in.”

To glorify something or someone is to declare with your lips, or reflect with your life their greatness. To glorify is to worship. So, to glorify God is to show His character with your life – or praise His greatness with your lips.

Now then, with these definitions – let's try to understand the glory of God from the testimony of Scripture.

The glory of God is His incomprehensible greatness, His inexpressible beauty, and infinite excellence. A quick survey of Scripture discovers that the human language is unable to fully express the meaning of the glory of God.

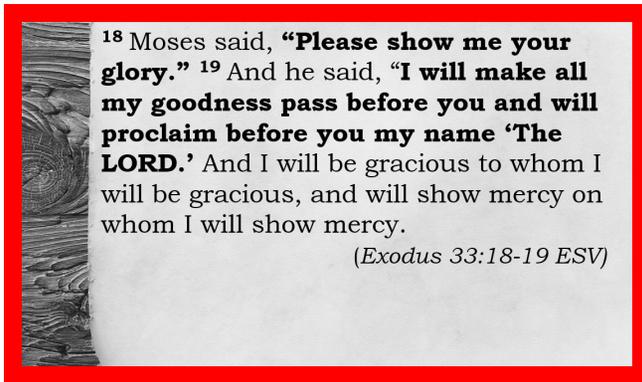
In **Ezekiel chapter 1**, the prophet attempts to describe *the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord* as a great cloud, with lightening, and burning – an expanse of radiant gems surrounded by angels – a whirling wheel - like a rainbow surrounding a throne.⁶

The best special effects wizardry couldn't come close such majestic splendor and radiance.

In **Isaiah 6** again the prophet's vision of the glory of God includes smoke, burning, a throne, and angels. And the glory of God is connected to His holiness. *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.*

Then the amazing passage in **Exodus 33 and 34** when Moses asks to see the glory of God.

⁶ Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 15-22, 26, 28; c.f. Ez 10



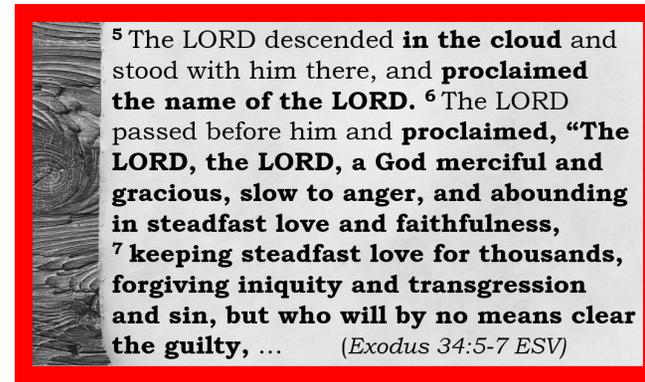
In **Exodus 33:18** Moses asks, *Please show me your glory. And God replies, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.'*

In other words – the glory of God is the sum of all His goodness – captured by His very Name or reputation.

Isn't it interesting considering the Reformation emphasis on the glory of God *alone* that God's proclamation of His glory immediately trumpets His sovereign grace in election: *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*

In **chapter 34 verses 5-7** God hides Moses in a cleft of a rock while His glory passes by,⁷

⁷ Exodus 33:22-23



As He proclaimed His Name to Moses – *The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...*

This is God's definition of His glory!

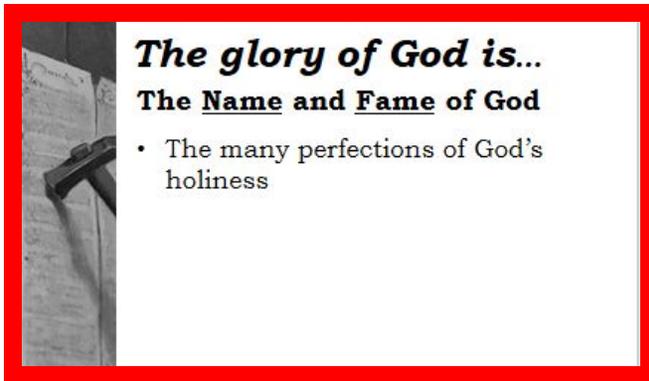
In brief,



The glory of God is the name and fame of God

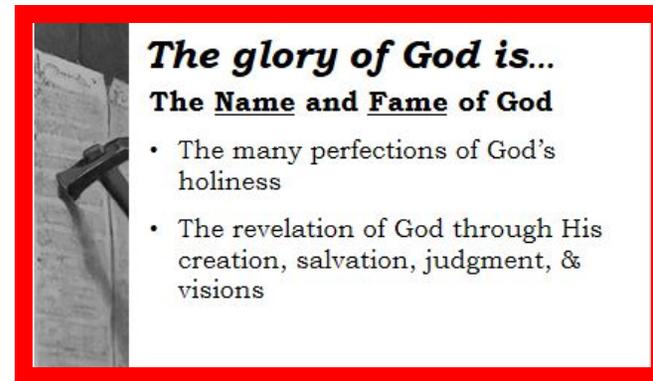
Internally – God’s glory is who He is – it is the supreme sum of His character in all its infinite expressions.⁸

You could say,



the glory of God is **the many perfections of God’s holiness**. For there is no God like our God who is entirely perfect in every one of His attributes!

But externally – the glory of God also describes His fame. Not only *who* He is – but also *what* He does.



God’s glory is **the revelation of Himself through creation, salvation, judgment, & visions**.

The heavens declare the glory of God **Psalm 19** says.⁹ **Ephesians 1** teaches our salvation is *to the praise of God’s glory*.¹⁰ **Revelation 15:8** describes how smoke from the glory of God fills the sanctuary during the tribulation judgment.¹¹ And every extraordinary vision of God in Scripture humbles the pride of men and exalts the brilliant radiance of the *who* and *what* of God.¹²

The glory of God is the name and fame of God – therefore, the name and fame of God is the ultimate purpose for all things!

In fact,

⁹ Cf. Ps. 57:5, 11; 108:5; 113:4; Romans 1:19-20

¹⁰ C.f. Isaiah 26:15; 43:7; Philippians 1:9-11; John 15:8

¹¹ C.f. Exodus 14:4, 17-18; Ezekiel 28:22; 39:13

¹² C.f. Exodus 33:14-34:10, 40:34-38; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1, 10; Matthew 17:1-8; Revelation 1:12-20

⁸ C.f. Is. 42:8; Ps. 79:9, 102:15



The glory of God is the central theme of Scripture.

Although human language is unable to adequately communicate the glory of God – there is no greater reality in history – and nothing more worthy of our passion and desire than the glory of God!

Truly, the desire to see and savor the glory of God is the key evidence of saving faith! You can't say you love God if your heart doesn't yearn to know more and more of His unfathomable person and work.¹³

The Reformers desired to decapitate Rome's infatuation with man as the center of all things – and show that God Himself was the supreme and ultimate purpose for all things. The glory of God is the central theme of both the Old and the New Testaments.

The Scripture first introduces us to the glory of God as,

¹³ Psalm 17:15; 27:4



The pillar of cloud & fire in Exodus.

Exodus 13 describes how the Lord led Israel out of Egypt *by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire*. **Exodus 16:10** says that *the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud...* so don't think of this cloud as a nice fluffy cotton ball of cumulus happiness.

It is described as a *dense cloud*,¹⁴ like *smoke from a furnace*,¹⁵ *full of thunder and lightning*.¹⁶ This pillar of cloud and fire was both attractive and terrifying all at the same time – causing God's people to worship when it drew near,¹⁷ and yet terrifying enough to serve as a rear guard between the Israelites and the Egyptians at the Red Sea.¹⁸

Here's the point – the pillar of cloud and fire was the visible manifestation of God's glory – for the Lord Himself

¹⁴ Exodus 19:9

¹⁵ Exodus 19:8

¹⁶ Exodus 19:16

¹⁷ Exodus 33:9-11

¹⁸ Exodus 14:19-20

sat in its midst.¹⁹ The cloud and fire was a visible manifestation of God's Spirit with His people²⁰ – leading, instructing, convicting, and protecting His redeemed.

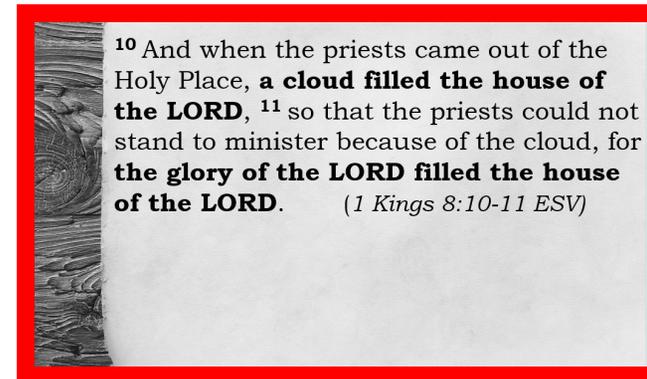
But the persistent sin of God's people made the presence of His glory among them a major problem.

First – at Mt. Sinai the cloud covered the mountain and Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God.²¹ Yet **Exodus 19** goes on to prescribe how even after all their religious washings and purifications only Moses and a select few were permitted to climb the mountain and experience intimate fellowship with God – the rest of the people would have perished in their sins if they would have broken through to look at the glory of the Lord.²²

Once the Tabernacle was built, the glory of God filled it to such an extent – that according to **Exodus 40 verse 34** not even Moses could enter the tabernacle. The pillar of cloud and fire brought joy of intimacy with God,²³ and yet also a fearful judgment of sin.²⁴

Israel needed to have God's glory with them – and yet their persistent sin made His presence among them a real liability.

Once in the Promised Land, this pattern repeated itself. When Solomon completed the temple – God's visible glory returned,



Filling the house of the LORD so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.²⁵

Perhaps the people thought now God's glory could rest among His people – but again the holiness of God cannot abide with rebellious sinners.

¹⁹ Psalm 97:1-2; 99:1-2, 7; Exodus 16:10

²⁰ Isaiah 63:11-14; Nehemiah 9:19-20; Haggai 2:5

²¹ Exodus 19:16-18; C.f. 24:15-17

²² Exodus 19:21-25

²³ Leviticus 9:23-24

²⁴ Leviticus 10:1-3; Numbers 14:10, 16:19, 42

²⁵ 1 Kings 8:10-11; C.f. 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3



So, God shows Ezekiel that He is removing His glory from His people in preparation for their Babylonian exile. What they thought was so sure and stable proved nothing of the sort – as God’s glory gets up and leaves His rebellious people. Sometime read the account in **Ezekiel chapter 10** as God describes how His glory moves progressively from the inner court – to the threshold of the temple – to the outer court – to the heavens – deserting the rebellious people and leaving them alone to the hands of their enemies.²⁶

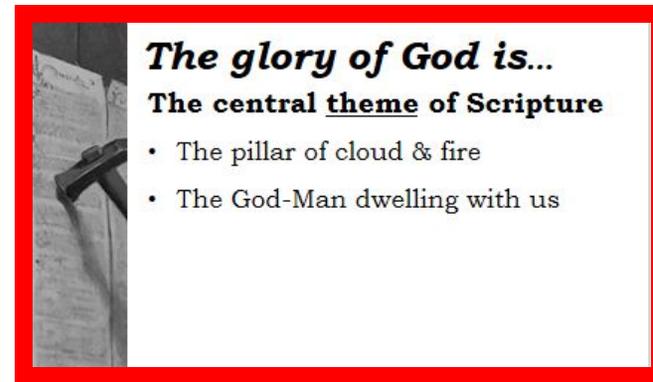
What Moses had feared back in **Exodus 33** had come to pass. The glory of God had departed from His people.

And yet God spoke through His prophets – in the future His glory would return to His people and draw *all the nations* of the world to its light.²⁷

No longer would the glory of God be revealed only through a pillar of cloud and fire – but now through,

²⁶ Ezekiel 10:1, 4, 5, 15, 18-19; c.f. 8:4; 9:3; Haggai 2:7

²⁷ Isaiah 4:2-6; 35:2; 40:2; 65:17-18; 66:19, 22; Ezekiel 43:2-5; 44:4



The God-Man dwelling with us

Luke chapter 2 recounts how one night when shepherds were out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, *and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.*²⁸ And as the angel announced the birth of a Savior – Christ the Lord – lying in a manger – suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, *Glory to God in the highest!*

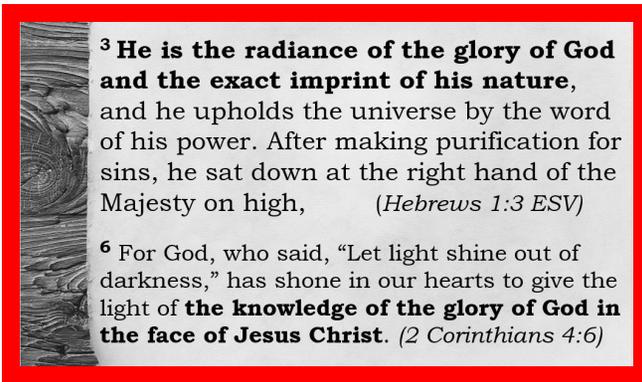
John announces the incarnation of Jesus Christ this way:

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt – or tabernacled – among us, and we have seen his glory – glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*²⁹

Hebrews 1:3 teaches that Jesus is,

²⁸ Luke 2:8-14

²⁹ John 1:14



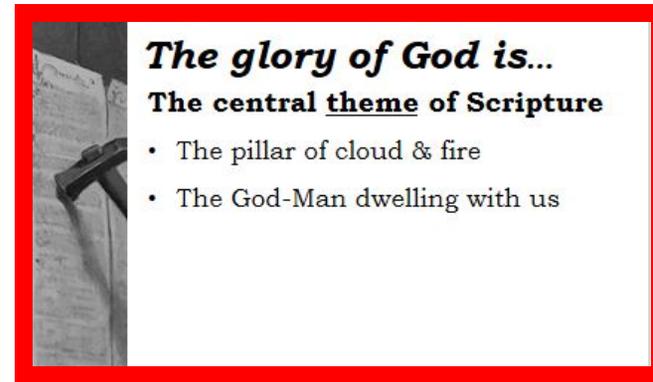
the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

God no longer reveals His greatest glory in a cloud or an earthly temple – but now according to **2 Corinthians 4:6** we know *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.

Soli Deo Gloria! By making His Son a man – God enables us - His people - to experience the fullness of the presence of His glory as a blessing – and not a curse!

God is now with us³⁰ – in the purest fulfillment of the Old Testament expressions – revealing His glory to the world.

³⁰ Matthew 1:23



And yet surprisingly – God’s glory is revealed in Christ *through humiliation*.³¹ This Lord of glory was crucified.³² In fact Jesus’ words and prayer in the upper room make it explicitly clear that his substitutionary death for sinners actually revealed His glory!³³

This is the exhilarating truth rediscovered by the Reformers 500 years ago that they were willing to become martyrs for! Jesus reconciled us to the Father – by taking our place and paying our sin debt on the cross – so that by faith in Christ alone we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!³⁴

We are accepted by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! All to the glory of God alone!

³¹ Philippians 2:6-11

³² 1 Corinthians 2:8

³³ John 12:23-24, 27-28; 13:31-32; 17:1-5

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21-22

Not surprisingly then, the glory of Christ immediately becomes the theme of the churches' preaching after His resurrection and ascension.

In **Acts 3** Peter proclaims that God *glorified His servant Jesus* by the resurrection.³⁵ In **Romans chapter 6** Paul explains that Jesus *was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father*.³⁶

And now that Christ has sent His Spirit to indwell His church, the very "*Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*"³⁷ *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom – and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*³⁸

So God's glory is the marvelous theme of salvation. God displays His glory and brings even more glory to Himself through,



The glorification of the redeemed!

Saved hearts rejoice in this truth! God shares His glory with sinners like you and me – all for the supreme and ultimate purpose of magnifying His Name for all of eternity!

Remember – God created you in his image – to be a lantern of His likeness in this world.³⁹ You and I were created to put God's Name and Fame on display. Yet *all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God.*⁴⁰

Now only by God's grace alone – through faith alone – in Christ alone – *God is bringing many sons to glory* – **Hebrews 2:9-10.**

2 Thessalonians chapter 2 rejoices in this truth,

³⁵ Acts 3:13-15; c.f. 1 Peter 1:21

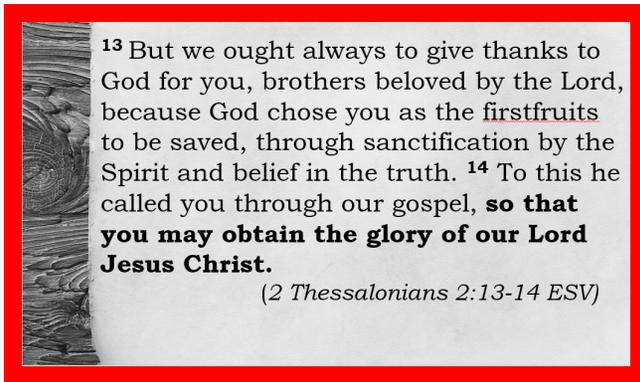
³⁶ Romans 6:4, c.f. Philippians 3:21

³⁷ 1 Peter 4:14

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:17-18,

³⁹ Genesis 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 11:7

⁴⁰ Romans 3:23



summarizing the very gospel of God as that which causes us to *obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 8 makes sure we understand that our future glory with Christ comes through the path of suffering.⁴¹ By His Spirit we carry our cross today – knowing this will bring praise, glory, and honor to Christ on the day of His return.⁴²



⁴¹ Romans 8:17-18

⁴² Matthew 16:24-25; 1 Peter 1:6-7

For of course, the climax of God's glory in Scripture is yet future – when *Jesus Christ, who is our life, appears, and then we also will appear with Him in glory.*⁴³ Isn't it interesting to note that Jesus will come back in a cloud of glory to deliver His people and conquer His enemies forever?⁴⁴

The central theme of God's Gospel is truly the glory of God alone – so that no flesh may boast or believe that they are saved by their own works.

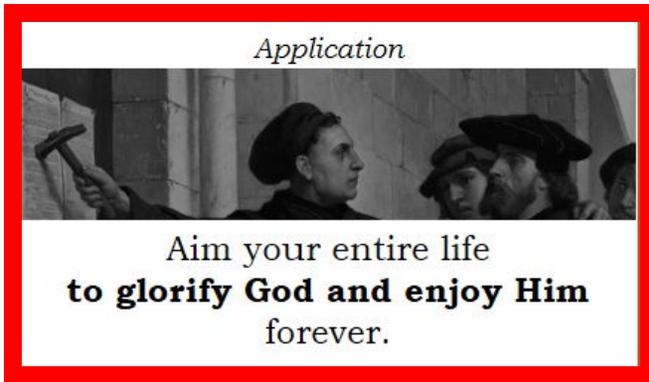


The glory of God is the supreme and ultimate purpose for all things.

So then, what is our response? Knowing that all of life and all of salvation is to show and tell the glory of God alone:

⁴³ Colossians 3:3-4; c.f. 1 Peter 1:6-7; 5:4; Philippians 3:20-21

⁴⁴ Matthew 24:30; 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Acts 1:9-11



Aim your entire life to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Delight to really know and love God. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ and His Spirit you can now draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith.⁴⁵ In fact to glorify God is to pursue greater faith in God's promises. Faith in God glorifies God.⁴⁶

So, are you putting your faith in Christ alone? Or are you trusting that you've done something right for God to save you? Are you trusting the church or your merits to save you?

To glorify God is to believe on His Name alone – using your lips to tell others of His glorious goodness – and using your life to reflect His holy love as lights in this dark world.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Hebrews 10:19-23

⁴⁶ Romans 4:20; 2 Corinthians 1:20

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:13-16



A chief Reformation doctrine is that above all – God glorifies Himself. And He delights to bring glory to Himself in part through glorifying redeemed sinners –allowing us to glorify Him through our faithful response to His grace.

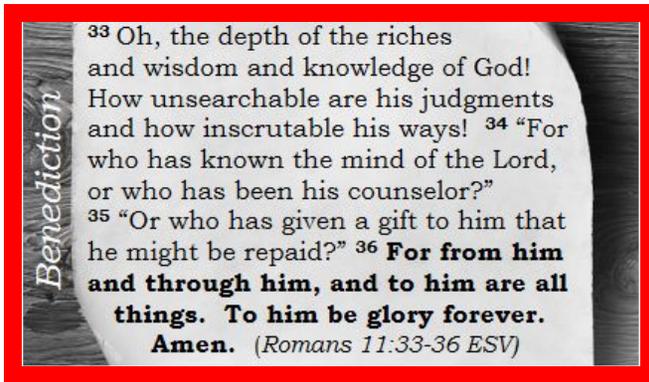
May God receive all the glory and honor that He alone deserves!

Let's pray.

<To God Be the Glory>

Let's pray our Benediction now as we are dismissed,

Benediction



³³ 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. **Romans 11:33-36**

Recommended Resources on The Glory of God:

- Psalm 29:2; 96:8; 115:1
- Isaiah 2:11; 42:8; 59:19
- Ezekiel 36:22
- Romans 11:33-36
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
- Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; 2:8-9
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/what-are-the-five-solas>
- <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/glory-god-alone/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/to-the-glory-of-god-alone>
- <http://equip.sbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Glory-to-God-Alone-Another-Look-at-a-Reformation-Sola.pdf>

- <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2017/09/12/protestant-and-catholic-whats-the-difference/>
- <https://www.proclaimingthegospel.org/>
- *God's Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life*, David Vandrunen

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Psalm 17:15 and 27:4. Discuss why the desire to see and savor the glory of God is a key evidence of saving faith. What would cause a soul to desire something more than the glory of God – in earth or in heaven above?
2. Read John 1:14, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:15, 2 Corinthians 3:18 & 4:6. How is God's glory revealed to us today? What should be our response to the revelation of God's glory today?
3. Read Isaiah 42:8. How are we tempted to rob God of His glory today? In what idols are we tempted to boast? Confess your idolatry to one another, and pray that God would purify your love and worship of God alone – all for His greater glory and praise.
4. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. One of the ways God brings glory to Himself is through His glorification of believers in Christ. Discuss together the role of the Spirit, and the role of suffering as it relates to believer's participation in the glory of God.
5. The Reformers taught that salvation was by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone, all for the glory of God alone, based on the authority of the Scriptures alone. Why are these doctrines so important for our lives and worship as Christians today? What have you learned about God and His plan of salvation from this

Reformation Celebration? What Scriptures have affected you the most in this study?