

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop October 31, 2017

Facebook is always on the hunt for new forms of “clickbait”—new ways to get us to open their apps and be assaulted by the ads by which *Facebook* makes money. One of the more recent tricks is to alert us to the fact that “three years ago today, you were doing this,” or “two years ago today, you became friends with so and so.” So, in that spirit, let me ask **what were you doing five hundred years ago today?**



While most of us have no idea who our ancestors were that far back, and certainly have no idea what they were doing on October 31, 1517, there is one person in the world whose activity on that long-ago day is still known, and is still relevant to us today. His name was Martin Luther, and on that day, the young Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Wittenberg posted a document entitled, “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences” on the door of All Saints Church.



Luther did not intend to set in motion all that followed his posting. He intended to promote academic debate about the medieval practice of indulgences—offering money to the church in order to remove punishment for sin. Luther was disturbed by the church’s efforts to have people pay for “forgiveness” rather than encouraging them to genuinely repent from their sins.

What followed Luther’s posting of his “Ninety-Five Theses” eventually became what history knows as “the Protestant Reformation.” While “the Reformation” gets most of the press, the Church has actually re-formed itself many times across the centuries in the effort to be more fully obedient to our Lord’s commands. This is just the most prominent of those efforts thus far.

And we Baptists were not actually part of “Luther’s” Reformation. Our heritage comes a little later, in what would become known as “the Radical Reformation”—but that’s a story for another day.

Other “big names” in the Reformation included John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, and John Knox in Scotland. And, as is unfortunately often the case, there was a great deal of persecution involved in this process, as various groups called one another “heretics” and tried to stamp each other out.¹

For all the ugliness, though, a number of important theological principles became clearer through the Reformation debates, and we stand in the reformers’ debt, even now. The most famous of these principles have come to be known as

¹ As Timothy George once noted, “the age of the Reformation produced more martyrs than all the persecutions in the early church.” Neville Callam, “Commemorating the Reformation,” Blog 17 October 2017. <http://bwanet.org/dialogue?view=entry&id=155>

October 31, 1517

“The Five *Solae*” of the Reformation. *Sola* is the Latin word for “only,” or “alone,” and *solae* is its plural form.² You can find the Five *Solae* listed in various orders, but I think you will always find these five:

Sola Scriptura = Only Scripture

Sola Gratia = Only Grace

Sola Fide = Only Faith

Solus Christus = Only Christ

Soli Deo Gloria = Only for the Glory of God

I have attached some passages of Scripture that support each of these *Solae*, and expanded on the first three last Sunday. We’ll look at the last two this Sunday. If you want to see (or see again) what I said in those messages, you can find that at www.dcstancil.com/sermons.

All Hallow’s Eve Blessings to You,

Dave

October 31 = All Hallows’ Eve
November 1 = All Saints’ Day
November 2 = All Souls’ Day

² *Solas* is an Anglicized form.

The Five “Solae” of the Reformation

Sola Scriptura!

¹⁶ **All Scripture is inspired by God** and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Sola Gratia!

⁸ God saved you by his **grace** when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Sola Fide!

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. ¹⁷ This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “**It is through faith that a righteous person has life**” (Romans 1:16-17).

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² **We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.** And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. . . .

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ **So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law** (Romans 3:21-31).

⁹ **If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For “**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**” (Romans 10:9-13).

Sola Christus!

³ I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ **died** for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.

⁴ He was **buried**, and he was **raised** from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. ⁵ He was **seen** by Peter and then by the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷ Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

⁸ Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

¹⁵ Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, ¹⁶ for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. ¹⁸ Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. ¹⁹ **For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,** ²⁰ **and through him God reconciled everything to himself.** He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross (Colossians 1:15-20).

Soli Deo Gloria!

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his **glory**, the glory of the Father's one and only Son (John 1:14).

⁴ I brought **glory** to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

⁵ Now, Father, bring me into the **glory** we shared before the world began! (John 17:4-5).

²⁷ For God wanted them to know that the riches and **glory** of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his **glory** (Colossians 1:27).

¹³ And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: “Blessing and honor and **glory** and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever” (Revelation 5:13).