

Soli Deo Gloria

The Five Solas

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The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks this: what is the chief end of man? Why does man exist? And the answer is that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. The glory of God is the purpose of our existence and going even further, the glory of God is the purpose of the universe, the glory of God is the purpose ultimately of everything that happens and that brings us to the topic as it is expressed in Latin, Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be glory.

Now we are completely, for those of you that are visiting with us or watching over the live stream for the first time perhaps, we are completing a series on what's known as the Five Solas of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone; Sola Gratia, grace alone; Sola Fide, faith alone; and Solus Christus, Christ alone, and all of those have pointed us to this great climax of Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be glory, and what this doctrine teaches us is that the goal of creation, the goal of salvation, the goal of eternity is not man, it is not anything else but the glory of God alone and Scripture resounds with this theme. When you follow the four Solas all the way through to the end, you could see that there would be no other conclusion, that it is God's revelation alone that tells us about the character of God and the nature of salvation, Sola Scriptura. It's God's grace alone that could save a man because man is dead in sin and hostile to God, only the sheer unmerited favor of God could ever save a man. Sola Fide, by faith alone, teaching us that justification is received by faith, Christ is received by faith not as a result of any works that we do, not a result of anything that's done by our hands or any purpose of our own heart. No, it is only by faith that we receive him that we can be saved and that we receive a full and complete justification that will satisfy God at the final judgment. And Solus Christus, that Christ alone is the one who has done the work. We looked at that last week, didn't we, and that it was Christ in his person as the perfect God-man, 100% God, 100% man in one person. Only someone like that, only someone like that could save us and it was only the work of the cross, it was only the shed blood of Christ that could ever wash away our sins; it was only the righteousness of Christ that could satisfy the righteousness that God requires and we receive him by faith.

So we start to see the sweep of the majesty of God in the doctrines of salvation and we are brought to our knees. In Sola Scriptura we see that we could never have found these things on our own. We were lost in sin and lost in trespasses. We could not have figured any of these things out. You cannot find the revelation of salvation by observing nature in

general revelation, it's in Scripture alone. It's not in other books that other religions put forward. It's not in Catholic tradition. It's not in anything that the Catholic Church would teach. It's in Scripture alone that we find these things and Scripture comes from God alone; it is God's word revealed through the biblical writers. So all of these things just bring us and sweep us up into the majesty of God and they make God great in our eyes and they reduce us to simple humility and adoring worship because we realize that we could not have found these things on our own, we could not have achieved them on our own, and that God did not wait for our contribution. It was Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone, Scripture alone and so in all of these things, we find the glory belongs to God alone.

The book of Romans is the Apostle Paul's most systematic treatment of the doctrine of salvation and the most systematic biblical treatment of Christian theology, you could say. As the book opens, he expounds on the wrath of God and the sin of man in chapters 1 through the first part of chapter 3. He goes on and explains the work of Christ for our salvation and explains how it is received by faith alone through chapter 5. He shows how that salvation works itself out in our earthly life and is secure for all of eternity in Romans 6, 7 and 8. Then in chapters 9 through 11, he goes even further and he explains how the Jews' rejection of Christ brought salvation to the Gentiles whose blessing will one day lead back to blessing to the Jews. It's a great sweep from God's wrath to salvation to the ultimate restoration of the Jews and at the end of those great 11 chapters, he declares this, look at Romans 11, beginning in verse 33 as we could bring all that we've talked about in these prior 5 or 10 minutes together in the summary, the climax of these four verses where he says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Look at that closing verse in verse 36 again: all things, from him, through him, to him. All things, it says. "To Him be the glory forever." The Greek word there is the word "doxa." It is used 166 times in the New Testament and this word for glory expresses the concept of honor; of splendor; of radiance; of magnificence. And in all of these things of which we have been speaking here as we started this evening, we see that they all point to the inherent brilliance and grandeur of God in a surpassing way that goes far beyond human comprehension and when we give glory to God, as we were singing earlier, it's important for us to remember that we're not adding to his intrinsic glory, his glory is already perfect, we're not adding something that he doesn't already have, rather we are ascribing a responsive praise to him for that perfection of majesty that belongs to him and to him alone and we recognize that these things that he has done has displayed his glory in a way that excludes any possibility of man taking glory for himself, it excludes any possibility of us boasting in anything of our own, and we give glory to God alone, we praise him alone for all that he is and all that he has done.

What we want to do as we conclude this series is we want to look at these three aspects of biblical revelation where Soli Deo Gloria is expressed: in creation, in salvation, and

ultimately in all of eternity. So the great sweep of biblical revelation reveals the glory of God and what we see is it lifts like a rocket and takes us into eternity where that is the concluding goal of even eternity itself. So this lifts us far beyond our earthly circumstances and brings us into a realm of God and God alone and that's what we want to look at this evening.

First of all, let's look at Soli Deo Gloria in creation. To God alone be glory in creation. As you well know, the Bible itself begins with God's act of creation in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And as Scripture unfolds, what we see the Bible teaching us repeatedly is that this creation that he has made exists to declare his glory. In Psalm 19:1 it says, "The heavens are declaring of the glory of God." As you go into the New Testament, turn to the book of Colossians 1, if you will. Colossians 1 as we see this theme of creation emphasized in this book by the Apostle Paul. Colossians 1, beginning in verse 15, speaking of Christ it says that, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," by which it means he has the highest rank. It's not that he, himself, was created but he has the highest rank in all of creation. And what can we say about Christ? Verse 16, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him." They have as their aim the proclamation of the glory of Christ.

So creation exists for his glory. God made both the visible and invisible realms of the universe for his glory. The Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the source of all things. All things have their derivation, all things are derivative of the creative action of the Triune God. He is the source from which everything else flows and yet he, himself, had no beginning and, beloved, what that means is we speak in such simple terms and yet we speak of such profound realities as we declare these things, because all things proceed from the Triune God, their purpose is his glory.

And yet we find that there is even more that feeds into our understanding of the glory of God in creation. We've taught often on the providence of God from this pulpit, the idea that God sustains all things; that God is at work in absolutely everything that happens and that he is moving everything to accomplish his desired end; that there is not a molecule in the universe that is outside the control and direction of God; that there is not any man, animal or plant that is somehow outside of the purpose of God. Scripture says that his eye is on the sparrow, he knows when the sparrow falls. Scripture says that he has numbered the hairs on your head. So we see a magnificent level of microscopic attention to detail from God to every aspect of his creation. Everything that moves, everything that is stationary is all under his hand and serving his purpose.

Go back to Ephesians 1 with me. Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 9, and we see this, Ephesians 1:9, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." This is a comprehensive statement of the existence of the universe and what do we find? What do we find not only in the existence of all things but

in their outworking over the course of chronology of all human history? We find that, "In Him," in verse 10, then moving into verse 11, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

Now as I like to say, I understand that it's very easy for us to read through these things and miss the full significance of what is being said, but that's not for any lack of the word of God or lack in the word of God, it's all right there plainly stated and we just need to take the time to read it carefully and look at the fullness of what it's saying, and that God means what he says in these matters.

Look at verse 10 with me again, "the summing up of all things in Christ." As we saw in Colossians, that's referring to the visible and invisible realm. Verse 11, "[He] works all things after the counsel of His will." Everything that happens, God is at work at, directing it to accomplish the purpose for which he set the universe in motion.

Now, that has a conclusion that we draw as we consider Soli Deo Gloria in creation. Ultimately, beloved, whatever exists and whatever happens anywhere in the course of time throughout all of human history, throughout the rise and fall of nations, whatever has happened in your life good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, difficult or joyful, whatever has happened God is at work in everything in every aspect of his creation to direct it to the accomplishment and the proclamation and display of his glory and his glory alone. That is the ultimate end. Look at verse 12 there with me in Ephesians where it says, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory."

So this is a very quick and very inadequate review of this but just enough for us to see that in any proper contemplation of creation, any aspect of the universe, we must see that that aspect of the universe, that aspect of history, that aspect of life, that living being, whatever has happened is all working toward displaying in one way or another the glory of God and that is the goal of creation is to display his glory in all things. There are those that say that in one sense, you know, we ask why did things happen? Why do things happen? Why did this bad thing happen in my life? Or why is this happening in the world? Or what's going on? It's not overly simplistic to say that ultimately the answer, whatever the question may be, that ultimately the answer to that question in any and every circumstance is why did this happen? It happened for the glory of God, and we recognize that there is this comprehensive, relentless, wonderful purpose that is at work that in the end all things will work out and display in one manner or another the glory of God. That's Soli Deo Gloria in creation.

Let's go to point 2 here all too briefly, all too briefly: Soli Deo Gloria in salvation. Soli Deo Gloria in salvation and God's plan of salvation, the spiritual redemption of sinners from their bondage to sin and Satan and ultimate judgment, to deliver them from that and to put them in Christ so that they will be with Christ forever throughout eternity with their sins fully forgiven, reconciled to God completely, enjoying his glory forever, being perfected and somehow reflecting the perfect glory of Christ, why did God do that?

Beloved, I barely need to say that in this location but it's good, perhaps, to say it. We understand, don't we, that it was not because God had to have us with him in the sense that God needed us to complete his existence, God's existence was already perfect, but the goal of salvation was not you, you being saved were a means to another end. The salvation of sinners is a means to display the glory of God. The ultimate display, the ultimate purpose in your salvation was the glory of God. You were not the end point, you were not the end goal when God saved you, rather your salvation was a means of displaying the incomprehensible love and mercy and patience and goodness of God in saving an unworthy one like you.

So as we enjoy the gift of salvation, as we find ourselves in Christ realizing that it was something that was *Sola Gratia*, by grace alone, that it's not something in which I boast, that I did not come to salvation because I was somehow smarter than the other one who did not put his faith in Christ, it's because God did a work that ensured my salvation that was done in a way that would display his glory. So beloved, when we are thinking rightly about God's plan of salvation and it's important for us to think rightly about God's plan of salvation, we must realize that it is a revelation both of his justice and his mercy in saving unworthy sinners and this is all to his glory. It is so that he will be rightly praised, to display his glory to the redeemed and to display his glory before the holy angels, that they might all see this manifestation of the glory of God which was hidden, in a sense, before the beginning of time but now in time, now as God has done an outworking of his plan of salvation, we start to get a taste of how great and good and wonderful his love and mercy and patience towards sinners really is.

Let's look at Ephesians 1 again here and just think about it from this perspective within this text. Let's think about it this way: *Soli Deo Gloria* in salvation as it pertains to the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Okay? We'll just look at it from that narrow perspective, narrow to the extent that you could call the Triune God from eternity to eternity a narrow perspective. That's kind of foolish, isn't it? But in Ephesians 1:3, look at it with me. I know we go to this text often. Ephesians 1:3, Paul is ascribing praise to God right from the very beginning of the letter and he says, "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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." Now, that is a magnificent statement, a magnificent reason to praise God and Paul blesses the name of God and he says, "Here's why I'm blessing God as I open it up. Let's consider God the Father, do you know what he has done? Do you know what God the Father has done for us who are in Christ? Before the beginning of time, he chose us in Christ that we might be brought to salvation; that we would be holy and blameless before him."

Look at verse 5, "He predestined us," in love, "to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." He says, "This is so magnificent. This is so wonderful. This is such a display of the brilliance and splendor of God that he would have such mercy, such a good plan before time even began to bestow this kind of blessing on us." And it's according, it says in verse 5, "according to the kind intention of His will," that we would be adopted into his family.

And what was the Father's purpose? What was the end goal? What was the end game, for a severe lack of a better term? What was the end goal of this choosing activity of God which is known as the biblical doctrine of election? Verse 6, it was "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Now, beloved, speaking to you here. Paul uses the word "beloved" to refer to Christ, I'm using "beloved" to refer to you under the sound of my voice here this evening. One thing that I would have you see in this and one of the reasons that we hold tightly to a biblical doctrine of election, that God truly chose who would be saved before the beginning of time not based on any goodness in them, not based on any foreseen decision that they would make but purely for reasons that are known to his own love and wisdom alone, one of the reasons that we hold to that tightly and we proclaim that without apology coming at it from a different direction, when you monkey with the doctrine of election and try to somehow condition it on something in man, some foreseen decision by man and that that becomes the basis of God's decision, what have you done when you do that? You have robbed God of his glory. You have said that man, there was something in man, there was something in us that conditioned God, that disposed God toward us in a way that distinguished us from other men and what does that do? It nauseates me to think about the significance of what that does in the context of what we're talking about here. It is undeniable that what that does is it siphons off the glory from God alone and it deposits it in the men that he has saved and no true Christian would, with understanding, want that. I realize that some might believe that and not recognize the implications of what they are saying and teaching and doing, but when you come to the fullness of Scripture, you realize that the biblical doctrine of election guarantees that God gets the glory alone. God alone gets the glory for his act of electing those who would be saved. It was according to his – look at it in verse 5 – it's "according to the kind intention of His will," not the will of man and as a result of that, as a result of the fact that it was from his kindness, his love, his holiness, he gets all of the glory. The Father's eternal plan means that God alone gets the glory for our salvation.

Now, beloved, the true Christian when he sees that laid out before him in Scripture does not object to that. He does not resent that. He rejoices in it. He says, "Of course it's that way. It could be no other way. How could it be any other way when I was a child of wrath and dead in transgression and sin and hostile to God and unable to please him? How could it be any other way than the fact that God gets the glory for the fact that I am a Christian; that I have been saved; that I am in Christ?" So Paul states it very clearly in verse 6 that the Father's eternal plan is to the glory of God alone.

Well, let's talk about the Son for a moment, the Son, S-o-n, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's consider it from his perspective for just a moment. What shall we say about the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross for our redemption? Paul discusses that in verse 7, he says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us." Beloved, after looking at Solus Christus last week, don't you remember, don't you see that the price of our redemption was blood and that it was blood of a lamb unblemished, the blood of

Christ, and that Christ alone shed that blood and that our redemption was not purchased in part by us but purchased by Christ alone? The price was paid by Christ alone at the cross. No wonder he could say as he hung there, "It is finished! It is done. It is over." The language, as we have seen in the past as we've studied this, is the language of a business transaction that says, "Paid in full." He paid it all, as we sing so often during Communion. Jesus paid it all. "All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow." That was blood shed for you 2,000 years before you were born. It was blood shed by Christ as he voluntarily laid down his life, as John 10:18 reminds us. Jesus said, "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative." Not from external compulsion but from his own internal desire to lay down his life for sinners like you in accordance with the Father's eternal plan.

Now I ask you: who gets the glory for that? Which one of us? Which one of us would go to that realm of exclusive glory and try to step in and claim some credit for ourselves? The very thought is repulsive, isn't it? It's the last thing that we want when we understand these things clearly. The redeemed heart, the regenerate heart says, "No, not to me, O God, but to thee and to thee alone be the glory. To thee and to thee alone, O Christ, for what you have done, the love that you showed, the blood that you spilled, to you alone be the glory."

And if I can draw your attention to verse 12 again as we go there once more, we see that this is the conclusion that we are to draw from the work of Christ on our behalf, "to the end that we who were," look at it there in verse 12 with me, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." Beloved, the reason that you exist, you exist for one exclusive reason, you exist to be an instrument of the display of the glory of God and whatever happens in our earthly lives is secondary by comparison to that great overarching purpose. Sometimes God will give a life for a short time, for a few short years, and then he'll take that life. Why is he doing that? Why would he leave the holes in human hearts behind? Ultimately in the final analysis in one way or another he intends to display his glory even through that. Our successes, our failures, they all find their unifying purpose, the unifying theme, the ebb and flow of life over the years and over the decades, the daily grind, the mountaintop experiences, the valleys of the shadow of death, why? What unifies all of that in our experience, the purpose of it all ultimately is for the display of the glory of God. That is why everything happens. That is why you and I exist.

The Father's eternal plan is for his glory. The shed blood of Christ on the cross is for his glory. What about the Holy Spirit? What about the way that the Holy Spirit applies salvation to those who come to faith, that he brings to faith, more accurately? Look at verse 13 of Ephesians, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who," the Holy Spirit, that is, "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession." The Holy Spirit has been given to you to indwell you, to seal you, to keep you in Christ and to be a mark of the down-payment that there is more in salvation to come for you in the future; that in the future to come, in the age still future to us as we sit here this evening, there is more of

God's salvation to be displayed, more of his grace to be poured out on us when we are redeemed in that final way and we are with him in glory and the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that all of that will certainly come to pass for us.

Why this work of the Spirit? What is the point? What is the end of it? I bet that you could guess by now. Look at verse 14, it is "to the praise of His glory." Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to the praise of his glory, to the praise of his glory, to the praise of his glory. It answers too, I'm not saying that this was the intent of the biblical writer but we can see the parallel as we remember Isaiah 6, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty," and in this threefold repetition of glory in Ephesians, we see, "To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory." God exalted above the heavens to the praise of his glory. Christ humbled in his Incarnation, Christ suffering on the cross in weakness and apparent defeat to the praise of his glory. Christ resurrected and ascended to the Father's right hand to the praise of his glory. The Spirit coming down, beginning the church age, bringing many to salvation to the praise of his glory. God's plan, God's act, God's application, God's glory to the point that man cannot boast, should not boast, is not permitted to boast. Look at Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." So that no one may take credit. So that no one may stand before God and take any credit for his salvation. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

And when we started this series, beloved, you may remember that I told you that the point of contention in the Five Solas is not Scripture, it is not grace, it is not faith, it is not Christ, it is not God's glory, it's not those five things per se that cause the contention; it is not those five things per se upon which the Reformation was launched because the Catholic Church is more than content to talk about Scripture and grace and faith and Christ and God's glory. Where the conflict, where the collision, where we stand our ground that distinguishes the Reformation faith from everything else is the word "alone." Sola Scriptura, not the traditions or teaching of men. Sola Gratia, by grace not by works. Sola Fide, faith alone. Solus Christus, Christ alone. Not Mary. Not Joseph Smith. Not Mary Ellen White. Not any man. Not you. Not me. Christ alone. And the sum and the application and the outcome of all of these things, then, leads us inevitably to the glorious climax of Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be glory.

You know, this is a wonderful place for you to take the spiritual temperature of your heart. Whether you understand these things, where your affections lie, to ask yourself, to look in the mirror and to say, "Is this the most important thing to the affections of my heart? Do I understand? Do I grasp? Do I heartily endorse and embrace and affirm and shout out, as it were, the glory of God alone?" because this is the teaching of God's own word, Soli Deo Gloria.

So we see it in creation, we see it in salvation, and beloved, what I would hope for some of you at least, I'd hope it for all of you but I realize, you know, you've had long work days and all of that, but I hope it would come to your mind that there would be a sense of an overwhelming grandeur to the things that we see as you realize the universal

implications of what we're talking about. From before the beginning of time until now, it's about the glory of God. The depths, the unspeakable, unfathomable depths of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Soli Deo Gloria. Your redemption, your reason for existence, Soli Deo Gloria. This is pervasive. This is massive. There is nothing more important anywhere in the universe than the glory of God. Nothing in time, nothing in eternity surpasses this one great theme.

So we come back, we circle back in light of these things and we appreciate the skill of those who were involved in the writing of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. What is the chief end of man? Well, when we consider creation and salvation and all these things that we've been saying, there's only one answer: man's chief end is to glorify God. That is the reason that you exist. It's not your business. It's not your relationships. It's not your family. That's not the chief end. Those are secondary goals to a greater end. It's the glory of God. This is your chief, your primary, your highest end. Your goal in life is the glory of God.

Let's take it to a third and final point. Once again, I feel like the chariot could come and just carry us into heaven as we talk about these things. We come to the third and final point: Soli Deo Gloria in heaven. Soli Deo Gloria in heaven, in the life to come, in eternity, in other words. You know, I'm not a historian, I'm not at all qualified to say what I'm about to say. This is just a human opinion from an unworthy man, but I rather suspect that as historians, church historians look back 100 years from now on our age and the rise of the seeker-sensitive movement and the drift of so-called evangelicalism over the past 50 years or so, I rather suspect that somewhere in some of their books they will have a severe judgment upon the seeker-sensitive movement and the way that so many pulpits conditioned people to think that salvation was primarily about what Christ could do for us in this life. Your best life now. The Purpose Driven Life. The idea that it's about life and we're conditioned to think about what God can do for me now, and that's the purpose. You know, I don't know that anyone would actually say it this way but there's this lurking mindset in the cesspool of that philosophy of ministry that says the purpose of God is to give us what we want in this life. "I want healing. God ought to give it to me. I want prosperity. God ought to give it to me. I want a wife, I want a spouse. God ought to give it to me." And we're conditioned to think about God as he pertains to our needs and the centrality of our desires in this 70 year window of existence that we have, and I can't imagine that there won't be skilled church historians 100 years from now, if the Lord tarries, who look back on it and condemn it in the severest of terms, and in advance, I join with their judgment. It is a travesty that we have been conditioned to want God, to want Christ, to think about salvation in terms of what it can do for us in this life and that we've lost sight of the ultimate end of salvation.

Well, beloved, let me remind you in the time that we have remaining that God called you to salvation for a higher purpose. You are in Christ for a far higher purpose than that God can smooth out the bumps in the road in your life. That is not why you were saved. That is not the purpose of God. That is such a limited low view of the purposes of God and why you exist and the nature of salvation that it is not worthy of Scripture. It's not worthy of Christ. That kind of thinking, that kind of mindset is crud on the bottom of your shoe

that you need to scrape off and kick away. I don't know where that metaphor came from but it was right there. No, beloved, God called you to salvation, God called you to Christ, the Spirit drew you to Christ for a far higher purpose than that that swallows up everything, and I mean everything in this life into a realm of far far greater purpose.

Look at 1 Peter 5. This is not a passage that we've taught on here at Truth Community Church but it is one that has so often been coming to my mind over the past several months. Let's start in verse 8, Peter writing to those who were suffering persecution, encouraging them in Christ, pointing them to greater purposes, pointing them here in verse 8 to the reality of the spiritual battle that was at work in the midst of their suffering, he tells them, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." He says, "I know you're in a spiritual battle but stand firm. Don't yield. Resist the devil and take comfort in knowing that other brethren elsewhere are going through the same sufferings that you are."

What's the end goal that would fuel the motivation? These people are suffering. There's nothing about a best life now for them. What is it, then, that would motivate them and help them to stand firm? Verse 10, "After you have suffered for a little while," just a short little period of time, "the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." You have been called not for an easy life here on earth, you have been called to be a participant in the display of the eternal glory of God in Christ. That's why you exist. That is the higher purpose of your salvation. Glory, being conformed ultimately and perfected to the image of Christ is why you were called to salvation. You're lifted to a realm that is far beyond, the purpose of your life I should say, is lifted to a realm far beyond this short existence that we have here on earth and everything, all of the details of your life are just an incidental means to that greater end. You are called to the eternal glory of God in Christ. The eternal glory of God. You are called to one day see face-to-face the resurrected Christ. That is your ultimate purpose, 1 John 3:2. This is what's coming for you in Christ. We will be made like him because we will see him as he is. What lies ahead for you, Christian brother, what lies ahead for you, Christian sister, is nothing less than being in the presence of the resurrected Christ and seeing him face-to-face. You will see his face, he will see your face, and you will be changed and conformed to his image when that happens and somehow you will share in the perfection of Christ, you will share in his image so that the glory that belongs to Christ will somehow be shared in a perfect measure to you. Sin will be banished. Earth will be forgotten. The tears of this life will be wiped away never to come back again. The former things, Isaiah says, will not be brought to mind. And in that place of perfect bliss of a perfect vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, there and then and only there and then will the final purpose of your salvation be achieved.

I've said it many times, I'm getting older and so I just start to repeat myself. Some of you do that too so I trust that you'll sympathize with me in it. But I've often thought, and I think about this a lot, that when I see the face of Christ, when I see him face-to-face and

experience the fullness of the purpose for which God saved me, it's beyond comprehension but I imagine that, and though heaven will not be like this, I imagine that the magnitude and the glory of that will be so great and so consuming that I would be satisfied if I was just sent to a corner of heaven to sit by myself and spend all of eternity doing nothing more than remembering, "I saw his face! I saw him as he is! I saw the resurrected face of Christ!" And that alone would be enough to satisfy the longings of my heart throughout all of eternity and the fact that God has more for each one of us than that is just amazing grace.

Beloved, I put it in those terms to you to help you somehow grasp a tiny little bit, that seeing Christ face-to-face for an instant is far greater than anything that this earth could offer you; far greater than any success or any love or any relationship could ever be. That moment is far surpassing in its grandeur and purpose than anything that could happen here on this sin-rotted earth, in your sin-distorted mind, and sin-distorted flesh. That will be a perfect moment when you see Christ face-to-face and, beloved, as I also like to say, that when we are in heaven with Christ, it is not going to be a foreign alien environment to us at all. This is why we were saved. This is why God saved us and that can only mean one thing, well, it means a lot of things but it certainly means this among others, it means that when we are with Christ in heaven, that for the first time as a believer will fully and completely seem like we are at home because that is why we were saved, was to be there, and we feel like strangers and aliens as we walk through this life, we feel the weight of our sin and our corruption, we feel the weight of hostile enemies, we feel the weight of the opposition of the devil, we feel the weight of our failing flesh. None of that will sully, none of that will detract from being with Christ, and that will be the moment of perfection for which our hearts are longing. That is the moment of perfection for which God created you, for which God saved you. When your purpose is fulfilled, when that comes to pass, there will be a sense in which you say, "I am at home. I belong here. I belong to this resurrected Christ and he belongs to me." And it will all be Soli Deo Gloria.

Now when we're in heaven, the goal in heaven will be the glory of God. Look at Revelation 4. We'll just look at these passages all too quickly, all too briefly. If you ever want to feel inadequate, be a sinner and preach on the glory of God. That'll do it for you. I speak by way of present experience.

Revelation 4:10, "the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.'" This has come full circle, hasn't it? We started out talking about the glory of God in creation and we see in heaven all of creation was created for your glory and there will be worship around the throne for that. You are worthy to receive glory.

Look at Revelation 5:11, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands," countless angelic beings, "saying with a loud

voice," booming throughout all of heaven this theme, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them," do you see the comprehensive nature of it once again? "I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'"

Revelation 21, turn there with me, if you would in verse 10. What will the new Jerusalem be like? What will eternity be like? "He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance," there's that word, "Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper."

Beloved, this brief survey here this evening has done no justice to this topic of Soli Deo Gloria but I trust that it's enough to see the overarching unifying theme of the universe, of your salvation, of the purpose of all existence of all creatures visible and invisible. Think about it on a time-line, beloved, if you want to. From creation throughout all of time and into heaven, Soli Deo Gloria. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever." This one transcendent theme informs all of your life. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Beloved, the resources, the opportunities, the relationships, the abilities that you have in the present time, one single purpose, Soli Deo Gloria. Soli Deo Gloria, does that shape your affections? Does that shape your priority? Young people, are you letting that inform your perspective on what you want to do with your life? If not, you haven't even started to think properly. Of course it's not just the young people, is it? This is for all of us.

Those of you who do not know Christ, oh, oh, the weight of the contrast of that. You've rejected the Gospel, you've rejected Christ and you refuse to bend your knee to him. Let me say this to you as a friend as well as a pastor, and you will not have this man reign over you, let me say this to you: it is no wonder that your life seems so disordered to you, it is no wonder that you cannot make sense of life, it is no wonder why your life is so fragile, you are out of harmony with the very purpose of the universe. You are rejecting Christ who is the image of the glory of God and all things exist for his glory, how can you ever think that your life is going to work out right? Do you realize that even the judgment of the wicked throughout all of eternity will be a vindication of the glory of God? That the destruction of impenitent sinners will be a display of his glory? An indication of his holiness? A vindication of his law? A vindication of his Son? Do you recognize these things, beloved? I urge you, those of you that are spurning Christ up until this moment, Soli Deo Gloria. Repent of your self-oriented selfish life and come to Christ and get yourself into harmony with the purpose of the universe, the purpose of all things.

And for all of us individually and corporately as Truth Community Church, we must and let us set our hearts on this single solitary aspiration: Soli Deo Gloria. Sola Scriptura. Sola Gratia. Sola Fide. Solus Christus. All Soli Deo Gloria.

Let's pray.

Father, what can we say? Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Let the people rejoice. To God be the glory. Great things you have done. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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