

Grace to you and peace from Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to God. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. It is certain.

In Jesus name, fellow redeemed,

The Lutheran Reformation was a time of rediscovery. It was a rediscovery of gospel truth long hidden or obscured. The truth had been obscured by all sorts of man-worked satisfactions. To really be assured of forgiveness, it was taught that you must prove yourself. God's forgiveness was thought of as something to be merited, of which you must be worthy. Forgiveness was not free; nor was it enough to believe that for Christ's sake, God declares us righteousness. The Word was no longer looked to as the SOLE source of Truth. The Protestant Reformation was a rediscovery of a gracious Judge who forgives and sets free for Christ's sake SOLA, Latin meaning "ALONE." **Sola Gratia** – Apart from deserving anything but punishment, God saves by grace alone. ... **Sola Fide** – Apart from any works we perform, God saves by faith alone in Christ. ... **Sola Scriptura** – Apart from any words or reasoning of man, God saves because His Word says so.

SET FREE BY THE TRUTH SOLA

John 8:31–36 (NKJV) — 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. **32** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." **33** They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" **34** Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. **35** And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. **36** Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Set Free by the Truth Sola

1. Sola Gratia – GRACE ALONE

Sing – TLH 373:1-2

2. Sola Fide – FAITH ALONE

Sing – TLH 373:3-4

3. Sola Scriptura – SCRIPTURE ALONE

Sing – TLH 373:5-7

1. Sola Gratia – GRACE ALONE

In Jesus name, fellow redeemed,

The Lutheran Reformation was a time of rediscovery. It was a rediscovery of gospel truth long hidden or obscured. The truth had been obscured by all sorts of man-worked satisfactions. To really be assured of forgiveness, it was taught that you must prove yourself. God's forgiveness

was thought of as something to be merited, of which you must be worthy. Forgiveness was not free; nor was it enough to believe that for Christ's sake, God declares us righteousness. It was not enough to accept what the Word said. The Protestant Reformation was a rediscovery of a gracious Judge who forgives and sets free for Christ's sake – a rediscovery that by simply trusting in Jesus' work of salvation you are set free – a rediscovery that because God's Word says so, it is so. To distinguish the Scriptural definition of this salvation truth, the Latin creed was born: **Sola Gratia ... Sola Fide ... Sola Scriptura. We are saved by GRACE ALONE, through FAITH ALONE, that which founded on SCRIPTURE ALONE**

SET FREE BY THE TRUTH SOLA

1. Sola Gratia – GRACE ALONE

A Scriptural definition God's grace is a love in absence of all our deserving. It is truly a love SOLA. God's love for us is ALONE LOVE – in absence to any worthiness or deserving on the part of the beloved. We read this in our Scripture reading: ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Romans 3:23–24)***

SOLA GRATIA

We are set free by the truth of salvation by GRACE ALONE.

Anything short of this TRUTH ALONE leaves us slaves. (v.34). With emphasis, Jesus says “Amen! Amen!” – “Most assuredly.” The Word speaks the truth alone.

Before leaving for work, you decide there's just enough time to have one more cup of coffee. You soon are running behind. To avoid being late, you coast through a stop sign and continue on down the road at 15 miles over the speed limit. Blue and red lights begin flashing. Then comes the feeling in your stomach – not only are you going to be late anyway, you are going to receive a hefty fine, points added to your driving record. In such situations we really have no excuses; we are caught redhanded; we know what we deserve.

This paints no pretty picture when it comes to our sin. This is not even a mildly amusing picture. When we read in Romans that there is “none righteous, not one” we find ourselves totally separated from God and slaves to unrighteousness. ...***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).***

In the Formula of Concord, 1570, we confess: “We believe that in spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart and will of unregenerate man cannot by any native or natural powers in any way understand believe, accept, imagine, will, begin, accomplish, do effect, or cooperate, but that man is entirely and completely dead and corrupted as far as anything good is concerned. ... [he] is a slave of sin, the captive of the devil who drives him” (FoC, Art. II.7).

With such red-hands, it would be complete hypocrisy to point the finger at someone else without seeing three back at us. So rather than standing here this Reformation Sunday and pointing our finger at the Roman Catholic Church, we rather see the three pointing at us. After all, that was

what the Reformation was all about, a return to the honest words of Scripture – **“whoever commits sin, WHOEVER ... is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever.”**

A slave cannot liberate himself. He can never really escape. We can run, but sin will always hunt us. We cannot escape the truth that we simply do not abide in God’s house and family. And sin will find us – sooner or later. As Martin Luther wrote, “Fast bound in Satan’s chains I lay, Death brooded darkly o’er me, Sin was my torment night and day, in sin my mother bore me; Yea, deep and deeper still I fell, Life had become a living hell, So firmly sin possessed me.

There is only one thing that can set free the red-handed sinner – the declaration of the judge. GRACE ALONE can set us free when we deserve nothing else. (v.36) It was God’s UNDESERVED LOVE SOLA that moved Him to send His Son for an undeserving world. Luther goes on: “But God beheld my wretched state Before the world’s foundation, and, mindful of His mercies great, He planned my soul’s salvation. A father’s heart He turned to me, Sought my redemption fervently: He gave His dearest Treasure.”

...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Romans 3:23–24)

From this discovery of hopelessness, comes the hope. From this redhanded conviction that declares us guilty, comes God’s declaration of righteousness. You are justified by

SOLA GRATIA

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Sing – TLH 373:1-2

2. Sola Fide – FAITH ALONE

Working, earning, and reward are all concepts which come very naturally to us. Paying the fine ... working off the debt ... earning a living are the way the world works. Faith, however, is the opposite of this. Faith is the opposite of earning. It is an empty handed belief. As we considered in our Scripture reading: *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28)*

SOLA FIDE

We are set free by the truth of FAITH ALONE.

Scripture reveals what we have really earned when it says “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). And yet God declares that we are accounted righteous for Christ’s sake. How can this be? How can righteousness be counted toward us if it has not been earned? Luther writes: “When a man has learned through the command to recognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law – since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope – then, being truly humbled and reduced to

nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved.” (Luther, *Three Treatises*, p.279ff)

Before the judge, we stand with nothing to offer – no plea bargain.

The bondage that leaves us guilty slaves is the expectation that we have something to offer to this judge. We see this when the some of the Jews turn to their earthly status as freedom. “We have Abraham as our father.”

Jesus responds, this is slavery. We can always make things look good on the outside. But this bondage is sin, an inward corruption. Therefore it is not any outward work or association that sets one free. Going to church every Sunday does not free us from sin. I am a Christian. We have Luther as our father. Membership in the CLC does not grant membership in true household of God. Such thinking leaves us all slaves of sin. Only the Son can make us free, because only He truly has earned the right to abide in the house forever.

(v.31) Jesus speaks to those Jews who believe, saying that the true disciples are those who abide in His word. This is where faith is born. In the Word is where we receive the truth – we are empty handed. Faith sees no worthiness in me, but rather knows complete helplessness without Christ. Faith is born in the gifts of God offered to the hopeless and lost sinner. Faith frees us from the slavery that we rely on ourselves to attain eternal life. This faith believes in Jesus, the Son of God, for the freedom from the law, the freedom from lies of our flesh and sins we have committed. The truth SOLA sets us free.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ... Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Galatians 3:26, 4:7)

We should never think this means we are content to live in sin. Jesus says literally, “whoever keeps on sinning is a slave of sin.” Faith that approves of the sin that exists along side of Christ is no faith at all. Faith receives and responds. Faith justifies and receives the new life of Christ – a living, breathing creation that through repentance lives a new life in Christ. As it says in Romans 6 – ***“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” (Romans 6:6) ... “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14) ... “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:18)***

You abide in Christ where all your sins have been forgiven. You are no longer under the demands of the law that condemns you. This is freedom. A declaration that spiritually, you are righteous, because God says so. No longer are we stuck in an endless pursuit of sin and make up work. Our faith in Christ receives the righteousness of Christ so that we no longer belong to sin, but to God.

SOLA FIDE

We are set free by the truth of FAITH ALONE.

Sing – TLH 373:3-4

3. Sola Scriptura – SCRIPTURE ALONE

One of the greatest disputes Martin Luther faced when He stood before the councils of the Roman Church was where the authority of truth was to be found. The popular teaching was that the Church was the source of truth. Anything that was officially declared by the Church – that is, by the Leaders within the Church, was to be the source of confidence. When confronted with the command to withdraw his teachings, Luther responded: “Unless I am convinced of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or councils, since it is plain that they have often erred and often contradicted themselves) by manifest reasoning, I stand convinced by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me.”

SOLA SCRIPTURA

We are set free by the truth of SCRIPTURE ALONE.

(v.31) Where else will the Truth Sola be found? Where else are assured of a God who saves by Grace Alone? In what will faith trust?

While attending a public university for 6 years, I was exposed to many different “schools of thought.” It was encouraged that a student be diversely exposed to many different teachings and religions. The interactions that I had with fellow students proved quite diverse. I remember discussing these questions: what is truth? how do we know the truth? how can we claim one truth is better than another? Yet there was one thing almost all these discussions had in common: they attacked Christianity. All these talks of truth seemed to judge themselves better than Christianity. Ultimately, I was at a loss to reason this. And yet doesn't that prove the point Jesus makes? The truth ALONE can set you free. Apart from abiding in the Word, all else will always seem more reasonable. We are slaves to sin. We are slaves to thinking that it must be up to me to decide what is true and what is not. It must be up to me to decide what is sin and what is not.

Jesus responds to his listeners in the verses to follow – “you are of your father the devil ... there is no truth in Him” (8:44). “He who is of God hears God's word; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God” (8:47).

I was at a loss to reason, because the truth is something only God can give. Only by grace alone do we receive a faith alone to trust in God's Word alone. No human works or reasoning can achieve what God ALONE can give. Faith needs something reliable to rest upon. SCRIPTURE ALONE gives what we need. It gives the power of God to believe. From Romans again, the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law, being witnessed by the prophets – by Scripture, the revealed word of God. Because God says so, it is so. This is where faith is born.

As Luther adds: “The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. Therefore it is clear that as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and

righteousness so it is justified by faith alone and not any works; for if it could be justified by anything else it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.” (Luther, *Three Treatises*, p.279ff)

This word “abide” is found both in v.31 and in v.35. To abide in the Word is to abide in God’s presence forever. It is to be free to walk about in God’s holiness with all the rights and privileges of Christ Himself. Here is our dwelling place as disciples. **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)** ... Not potlucks, not church outings or activities – it is the Word. The WORD ALONE can keep us steadfast in the truth. The WORD ALONE can work faith to believe that we are saved by God’s grace alone apart from any work on our part. This reminds us that even our believing is performed by the Word. It is SCRIPTURE ALONE that will protect and defend us in every evil day, from every evil sin as it brings to us God’s forgiveness by creating faith in Christ. “If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death” (8:52).

**We are set free by GRACE ALONE, through FAITH ALONE, which is founded in
SCRIPTURE ALONE.**

This is the TRUTH SOLA

Sing – TLH 373:5-7