

GLORY OF GOD ALONE
Sermon Series: Distinctiveness of Presbyterians
June 28, 2015 Colossians 3: 12-17
The Church of the Covenant

If indeed it is through SCRIPTURE ALONE, BY GRACE ALONE, THROUGH FAITH ALONE, IN CHRIST ALONE then how are we to live our lives? --To the GLORY OF GOD ALONE. Our scripture from Colossians is emblematic of how the Reformed Tradition, of which we are a part, bids us respond to the Grace and Faith we receive through Christ alone. It notes: *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* (Colossians 3: 17) If the 5 Solas are true expressions of the truth of God, then we are asked in everything, through our words and our deeds, through who we are and what we do, through where we worship on Sunday mornings, and how we lead our lives the rest of the week, in everything, everything, everything, **do everything**, as it says, to the GLORY OF GOD ALONE..If we take this 5th "Sola" seriously, then everything in our life is to be focused on the Lord God Almighty, through Jesus, His Son. If I may say, then everything is about the WORSHIP of Almighty God in our lives. Our job is to be done to the glory of God. Our family life is to be lived to the glory of God. Our business life and our public life and our private life are to be lived to the glory of God. Like worship, our focus is to be on God...and not on ourselves. If the 5 Solas are true, then its definitely NOT about me...and its definitely about God.

But worship is not a good analogy for most people because most people really do not know what worship is. Is it some nice music combined with a lecture, combined with some nice read prayers, a little dose of children thrown in, some announcements to induce our participation in more activities for our lives that are already over-busy; maybe we are encouraged a bit; does it have value to me, we ask? Did I like the message? Did I like the music? Or not. Entertain me, we demand. We, often, alas and alack, make worship about us. Our focus in worship is on us; but the focus of worship in Spirit and in Truth is always on God, not on us. If it is Scripture Alone, then our focus needs to be on the Word of God alone. If it is Christ alone, then our focus needs to be on Him and His perfected work in our lives. If it is on Grace alone and Faith alone then our focus needs to be on what Christ and God have done, not what we have done. What God wants, not what we want. And if we can hope to get the focus of our life off of our own selfish desires and self-centered-ness then perhaps, perhaps we have the chance of focusing our worship and focusing our lives TO THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE...

There is no greater privilege in this life than entering into the presence of God, getting outside of ourselves and our wishes, and the cacophony of voices and stresses in our own mind, and focusing on the Lord God Almighty, on what His Son Jesus has done for us, on the hope we always have in Him. As we focus exclusively on God, we feel the light of this world grow strangely dim, and the glory of the next world becoming more powerfully alive, and our Spirit is quickened by the Spirit of the Living God, and our life is renewed and made new and abundant by HIM and His spiritual work in our heart. There is nothing more spiritually powerful and alive than focusing our life and our heart, our words and our deeds (as our scripture says) on HIM in an attitude of worship. But a lot of people miss this. Oh, worship is dull and boring; YES, as long as you continue to focus on yourself worship and indeed all of life itself will be dull and boring. But truly enter into the presence of God and we come alive through Him who has created us and given us life. Then choose to live your life and every part of it more and more about HIM, focusing upon God and Jesus, worshipping Him more and more 24/7 in all we do, and then every part of our life comes alive. Marriage tired and stale? --Focus on God. Job ceases to satisfy? --Worship God, everything you do at work, focus it on the Lord God Almighty, and watch what happens. Lack a reason to get up in the morning? Cease to have meaning and significance in your life? --Then by

all means focus your life SOLI DEO GLORIA, to the GLORY of God Alone...and watch what the Almighty can do. I can almost hear some of you saying –“Man, it’s a struggle and a sacrifice to get here even one hour a week; why would I ever want to live my entire life, worshipfully, to the Glory of God?” That’s already asking too much and now you want 24/7? I answer it this way: if you don’t want to come and enter into God’s presence and focus your life for even one hour a week, then why would you want to go to heaven where you would be worshipping God and focusing your life on HIM for all eternity? And if you don’t understand that this life is the practice session for the next life, that the sense of worshipping God more and more in your daily life, at your job, in your home, the focus of your hopes and thoughts and dreams, if you somehow don’t get it that all this is just preparation for eternity, fitting our heart for heaven, then why ever would we want to live forever in God’s presence, why would we even want to go to heaven, why would we want to live forever? Because if we make your life TODAY all about YOU, then why would we want to be in a place that makes it all about God? Soli Deo Gloria.

And you say to me, “Well, that’s easy for you to say, STU, we pay you to focus on God 24/7”. Yes, and what a deal it is. But in a way it is always hard for a Christian truly to be living their life to the Glory of God alone. I remember serving the church in Alexandria, Virginia. And there, as here, I needed to work tirelessly, endlessly, day in and day out. In ministry there is always more to do than there is time to do it. And if you had asked me, I would have said, as the good Calvinist I am, I am doing everything for the Glory of God Alone. I would preach to more than 600 people a Sunday, inside the beltway in Washington, D.C., to congressmen and diplomats and highly placed bureaucrats, and lobbyists and CIA and FBI agents, supported by a 90 voice choir behind me. I would work in my beautiful Georgian white woodwork office with the high ceiling and floor to ceiling bookcases, and I would look out the large windows into my private rose garden, endowed by the Trites family to the tune of \$55,000. And I would have said, because I believed it, this is all about YOU Lord; this isn’t about me at all. Everything I do is for the Glory of God Alone. I had been reading the Rick Warren book, “The Purpose Driven Life”, the first line of which is “Its not about you.” And one morning I woke up and was praying and it was almost as if a voice spoke to me and said, “This isn’t about me at all, Stuart, this is *all* about you.” Everything I did, to paraphrase the scripture, in word and deed, I did everything in the name of Stu; my own ego was what I worshipped in my life. That realization put me on a journey and a pilgrimage that thankfully has brought me here to The Church of the Covenant, where I honestly believe my ministry is a lot more about Jesus and a lot less about Stu. Its not about “Stu Alone”; its about Christ alone. And I say this just to note that sometimes we can delude ourselves that our lives are really focused on God, when the truth of the matter is, they aren’t. Trust me, *this* Washington is a lot better than *that* Washington.

Johann Sebastian Bach, on every piece of sacred music he wrote, inscribed the Latin words, *Soli Deo Gloria*, on it. It was his intention in his life to give glory to God alone through his music. Music that is intentionally focused on God presumptively is worshipful. But it also requires the author of that music and the singer of that music to seek to focus their life on the Lord God Almighty as they make beautiful music unto the Lord. Otherwise, the focus is on the wrong person. Maybe I am just asking us when we get up each morning at the start of each new day to sign the words “*Soli Deo Gloria*” to that day. Lord, I want today to be lived for you, for the Glory of You and Your Son, Jesus Christ, Alone. Lord, I want today to be about YOU. Lord, I do not want today to be about ME. Bach’s music fell out of favor. The styles changed. The culture changed. The world changed. And then long after his death his music was rediscovered, dusted off, and became important again. May I say, that living your life to the GLORY of GOD ALONE never goes out of style, never goes out of favor, and always makes our lives treasures to be rediscovered. The eternal makes our life eternal. Lord, I look forward to that day when I die and go to heaven, where I may sing praises to YOU and to YOUR SON Jesus Christ Alone, for what Your Son Jesus has done for me, forever and ever, world without end. **Soli Deo Gloria!** And Amen!