

# GDLC Men's Bible Study: Why Are We Lutheran?

## Outline:

1. A very small selection of foundational verses
2. The "Solas" (or better, *Solae!*)
3. What do we hold in common with other Christian Churches?
4. What do we believe that differs from other Christian Churches?

## **1. Foundational Verses (my favorites, nothing official!)**

### Ephesians 1:4-17

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

<sup>11</sup> In 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, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In 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, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

### Ephesians 2:8-10

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

## **2. The “Solae” (“Alones”)**

***Sola Scriptura***, "Scripture Alone": The Bible is the sole source and norm for Christians in faith, doctrine, and practice. *Sola Scriptura* says that we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant, sufficient, error-free, and the source of all truth.

2 Peter 1:21

2 Timothy 3:16-17

***Sola Gratia***, "Grace Alone": We are saved by God’s grace alone; our salvation has nothing to do with human merit. It is God who, through His grace, moves in the sinner's heart, enabling him or her to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:10-12

Ephesians 2:8-9 (yes, again!)

***Sola Fide***, "Faith Alone": We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. This sets Christianity apart from all other religions in the world. It is not by the believer's works or efforts but by Christ's work on the cross that a person is saved.

Romans 4:4-5, 5:8-9

Ephesians 2:8-9 (yes, again!!!)

***Solus Christus***, "Christ Alone": There is no salvation apart from Jesus.

John 14:6

Acts 4:12

Romans 10:9

***Soli Deo Gloria***, "To the Glory of God Alone": Salvation is wholly a work of God for His glory. Because believers contribute nothing to their salvation, and Christ is both Lord and Savior of all believers, we desire sanctification, that is, to live our lives, solely to glorify God.

John 6:44

Titus 3:4-5

1 Corinthians 10:31

### **3. What do we share in common with other Christian Churches?**

- We consider the Bible to be God's inspired Word. Everything else we believe about God, sin, salvation, and eternal life flows from that (or *should!*)
- The Creeds! Not all churches use – or even like that we use - the so-called “ecumenical creeds” (the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed), but the statements included in those creeds embody the beliefs of most every Christian denomination, church, etc. As such we share common beliefs that:
  - God created everything from nothing
  - Man is the pinnacle of God’s creation
  - Man rebelled against God by committing sin, has since then been inherently sinful, and cannot save himself from the taint of that sin
  - God has revealed Himself as a “trinity”, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons yet one God.
  - Acting out of His immense love for us, God sent His Son into the world to accomplish what we could not, perfect and complete keeping of God’s law, taking the punishment for our sin on the cross.
  - We believe that Jesus Christ, through whom and by whom all things were made, will return at the end of time to ultimately join in eternal communion with all whom He has called to be His chosen saints.
  - Until He returns in His Glory, has remains with us and imparts His Spirit to us as a Comforter, a Helper, and as the defender and keeper of the Church

See the LCMS web site, “Beliefs - The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod”, at <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs>. You’ll find a number of statements there that sound like other churches you know, or may have belonged to.

## 4. What do we believe that differs from other Christian Churches?

### The Sacraments

The Lutheran Confessions (our “founding documents”) describe the sacraments as the Gospel in “visible” form. They are at the heart and center of Lutheran Christianity. A sacrament is a visible activity or sign established by Christ, through which God imparts His grace to His people. Lutherans typically enumerate Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as sacraments. The Lutheran Confessions also include Confession and Absolution in that list, with the absolving pastor or priest being the visible element. Roman Catholics and others add additional items to that list (e.g. ordination, marriage, “last rights”).

Lutherans see the sacraments as God’s work, in which we are privileged and blessed to participate. But all the power behind and conveyed in the sacraments is God’s work on our behalf, not signs that we perform to prove we are believers.

Lutherans believe that faith is created in a person's heart by the Holy Spirit, not by the will or decision of the individual believer. Therefore, we baptize people of all ages, from infants to adults. Also, we see the Lord’s Supper as a remembrance, and a manifestation of the “Real Presence” of Christ, and therefore transcendent beyond mere symbolism. We read Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11 seriously. Most protestant churches see the Supper as a symbolic remembrance only.

### Free Will

Many protestant churches typically stress the role of “free will” in conversion, and accordingly describe faith in Christ as being reached or attained through a person's choice or decision. In fact, this is sometimes called “decision theology.”

Lutherans, on the other hand, believe that faith itself is a gift of God's grace and is brought about not by the “free will” of human beings but by the power of God's Spirit working through God's means of grace, the Word and Sacraments.

### Other Differences

- Church polity and organizational authority – Synods, Conventions, Dioceses, etc.
- “Altar and Pulpit” fellowship, Prayer fellowship, Potluck fellowship (*okay, I made that one up!*)
- The End Times. Lutherans are amillennial – go look it up! Or check out this lesson: [https://backtothebiblecatechism.com/wlb/WLB\\_08\\_End\\_Times.pdf](https://backtothebiblecatechism.com/wlb/WLB_08_End_Times.pdf))