

10-08-2017

**Message: Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone**

**Text: Psalm 119**

## **Introduction**

- A. We have a crisis of truth in our American culture. That's why societal norms and institutions are coming apart, and why there is such polarization in our society. The culture on many of our college campuses seems bizarre and unrecognizable to many. Postmodernism is encroaching, which says that there is no objective truth. Truth is subjective - what you perceive it to be. So now we deal with vocabulary and concepts such as fake news, bigender, gender fluid, Sarah has two daddys, the replacement of gender specific pronouns, conflicting drug laws, and arbitrary non-enforcement of laws, etc.
- B. 500 years ago there was a crisis of truth in the western church. This month marks the 500<sup>th</sup> of the Protestant Reformation, when the German scholar and priest, Martin Luther, in 1517 nailed 95 theses in Latin on a chapel door in Wittenberg for debate among scholars, titled, "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences. In order to fund the building/restoration of St. Peter's basilica in Rome, a monk named John Tetzel was selling indulgences in Germany for Pope Leo X. Confess your sin, pay an indulgence, and you have made temporal satisfaction for your sin. You are safe. You can also pay for indulgences to release your loved ones from purgatory. Tetzel is famous for saying, as soon as the gold in the basket rings, the rescued soul to heaven springs."
- C. Tetzel's pitch required no true repentance for sin. But Luther saw this as contrary to the truth of God's Word. And so his introduction to his theses read ...

***Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.***

- D. But instead of a local debate among scholars, Luther's theses were translated into German and within 2 weeks had spread throughout Germany, and within 2 months throughout western Europe, sparking a firestorm. We don't find the "5 Solas" of the reformation elucidated here, but at the heart of the debate on indulgences was the issue of authority - is the church the final authority on behalf of the truth of God, or is Scripture, God's Word, the final authority over the church on behalf of the truth of God? Luther begins his dispute by quoting Scripture, Jesus's words in Matthew 4:17 ...
1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
  3. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.
- E. The push back that Luther received would push him to embrace with greater resolve, “Sola Scriptura,” Scripture alone is the final authority on behalf of the truth of God, as the psalmist affirms ...

Psalm 119:160 **The sum of Your word is truth**, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

- F. The truth of “Scripture alone” not only had to be restored on Luther’s day, it had to be restored in Jesus day.

Isaiah 59:14 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; **For truth has stumbled in the street**, and uprightness cannot enter.

## I. Christ comes to reestablish God’s Word as truth.

- A. Christ is called “The Word,” because He reveals the God of truth to us.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ... <sup>9</sup> There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. ... <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- B. As Moses ascended the mountain to receive the law God, so Christ’s disciples ascended the mount to receive the law from Christ, who reaffirmed the truth of God’s Word that had been added to and subtracted from by the religious leaders of the day. The rabbis would come to hold that when God gave Moses the written law, He also gave Moses the oral law. Tradition was seen a source of God’s truth.

Matthew 5:1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish** but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; **but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** <sup>20</sup> "For I say to you that unless

your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'<sup>44</sup> "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Proverbs 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;

Matthew 15:1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,<sup>2</sup> "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."<sup>3</sup> And He answered and said to them, "**Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?**<sup>4</sup> "For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.'<sup>5</sup> "But you say, 'Whoever says to *his* father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given *to God*,"<sup>6</sup> he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And *by this* **you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.**<sup>7</sup> "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:<sup>8</sup> 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.'<sup>9</sup> 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

C. Jesus came and reformed His church, giving us an understanding of the truth of God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth,** and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; **Your word is truth.**

1 John 5:20 And **we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true;** and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

## II. The church embraces the gospel as the Word of God.

A. The apostolic churches embraced the Old Testament Scriptures and the gospel as the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that **when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God,** which also performs its work in you who believe.

Acts 17:10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and

when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.<sup>11</sup> Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for **they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.**<sup>12</sup> **Therefore many of them believed,** along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

B. Church fathers such as Augustine held that the Scriptures take priority over church leaders.

### III. The western church adds tradition to the Word.

A. In 1054 AD there was what is called the Great Schism between the Eastern Greek church \ and the Western Latin church. (Show map) The pope and patriarch excommunicated each other (not lifted until 1965).

B. In the church in the late medieval period there were hints of a second authority for truth emerging - the tradition of the church fathers, pope's councils. Between 1100 and 1400 this became prominent.

1. 1075 Pope Gregory VII wrote *Dictatus Papae*, declaring that the Roman Church "had never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity."

2. Innocent III (1198 - 1216) claimed that the pope was the mediator between God and man, having superior authority even over the emperor. Remarkable, since the Scriptures state ...

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

3. 1302 Pope Boniface VIII eclipsed them by stating in his papal bull, *Unam Sanctam*, that only God has the right to judge the pope, for the pope has authority over all: "We declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."

C. By the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the western church had committed to not only the Scriptures, but to church tradition as an infallible source of God's truth. Isaiah's (59:14) description of Israel also described the state of the church, "Truth has stumble in the streets."

D. With the multiplication of Bible translations into the vernacular of the people and a commitment to the Word of God as the final authority for faith, life, and godliness, "Sola Scriptura," Scripture alone, would provide a foundation for greater reforms than the practice of indulgences, reforms captured by the remaining slogans of the Reformation - faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, glory to God alone.

### Conclusion

A. Today in our American culture we are having a crisis of truth. Who speaks with final authority on what is true, what is reality?

1. Modernists say we are the judge of objective truth. Don't let that be you.

Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

2. Post-modernists say there is no objective truth - truth is what you personally perceive it to be, but there is no meganarrative to give meaning to creation. Relativism and deconstruction describe post-modernism. What a depressing way to live.

Ephesians 2:12 *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.**

B. Let the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth teach us to say and experience ...

Psalm 119

<sup>97</sup> **O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.**

<sup>98</sup> Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine.

<sup>99</sup> **I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.**

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.

<sup>101</sup> **I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.**

<sup>102</sup> I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me.

<sup>103</sup> **How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

<sup>104</sup> From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

<sup>105</sup> **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**

<sup>130</sup> The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

<sup>160</sup> **The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.**

C. For the Scriptures give us that wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture alone can do that, for Scripture is the very Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to **salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

