

FBC POWELL, 10-1-17 AM NOTES
Sola Scriptura – “The Scripture Alone”
Various Scriptures

#2 in Series, “What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Reformation”

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they often err and contradict themselves, I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. May God help me. Amen.”
—Martin Luther

“[Pragmatism is] the idea that truth is a matter of social negotiation and that ideas are merely instrumental tools whose truthfulness will be determined by whether they meet the particular needs of the present time.”
—Dr. Al Mohler

I. The Authority of Scripture

Matthew 28:18b “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

“The Authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s Word in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”
—Wayne Grudem

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son, Jesus Christ] **who knew no sin** to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Hebrews 10:10 “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Ephesians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

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

“There are only three possible forms of spiritual authority. First, there is the authority of the Lord and His written revelation. Second, there is the authority of the church and its leaders. Third, there is the authority of human reason. When the Reformers cried ‘Scripture alone,’ they were expressing their commitment to the authority of God as expressed through the Bible...The Reformation was essentially a crisis over which authority would have primacy...The Reformers believed that the authority belonged to Scripture *alone*.”
—Steven Lawson

A. Scripture Is Inspired

2 Timothy 3:16a (ESV) “All Scripture is breathed out by God...”

1 Corinthians 14:37 “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you **are the Lord’s commandment.**”

2 Peter 1:21 (NIV) “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

B. Scripture Is Inerrant

“We will not have it that God, in His holy book, makes mistakes about matters of history or of science, any more than He does upon the great truths of salvation. If the Lord be God, He must be infallible. And if He can be described as in error in the little respects of human history and science, He cannot be trusted in the greater matters.”

—Charles Spurgeon

II. The Sufficiency of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:5a “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...”

Psalms 19:7-11 “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

A. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Evangelism

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.”

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

B. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Sanctification

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

C. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Guidance

2 Timothy 3:16 (AMP) “Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof *and* conviction of sin, for correction of error *and* discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose, and action).”

Psalms 37:4 (NKJV) “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

Sermon 2: *Sola Scriptura* – The Scripture Alone

Various Scriptures

Five hundred years ago, a little-known German priest, in a town called Wittenberg, walked up to the church door, which served as a community bulletin board, and nailed a document there that changed the course not only of church history, but all history. The priest's name was Martin Luther and the document was called the 95 Theses (propositions advanced as an argument). The 95 Theses were not meant by Luther to be widely distributed. The 95 Theses were intended to lay out what Luther considered abuses in the church to be discussed and debated by leaders in the church. However, an unknown person or persons translated the document from academic language of Latin to the language of the people. The document was then widely distributed to the common people. This document served as a spark that set much of Europe ablaze and led to what is now called the Protestant Reformation.

The church leaders didn't take kindly to what they interpreted as an act of rebellion against the church. The concept of the separation of church and state was practically unheard of in the 16th century. The result is that the church leaders were the most powerful people in the government. After private attempts to get Luther to recant (repudiate) his views failed, Luther was ordered to stand before the church and government officials to give account. Even though he was guaranteed safe passage and promised that he would not be detained when he came to his trial in Worms (pronounced "Verms"), there was little likelihood that would happen. It had been promised before to others, but the promise was broken. After what we would call a trial where all of Luther's pamphlets and books were offered as evidence, he was given the night to consider if he would recant or face the consequences. It was a long hard night for Martin Luther as he agonized over the decision. He felt sure that if he refused to recant, he would be executed. When the morning came, the grace of God strengthened him and he stood before his accusers and said these famous words:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they often err and contradict themselves, I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. May God help me. Amen.

[Quoted in Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*, page 32]

Surprisingly the promise to give Luther safe passage was honored and he escaped Wittenberg with his life.

Martin Luther was not the only one who was standing against the corrupt Church of Rome. God was simultaneously at work in other men and women in other countries – leaders like John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Hugh Latimer, Lady Jane Grey, Theodore Beza, and so many more. God was orchestrating all of this, but Luther seemed to be the match that lit the dried kindling.

As we saw in part one of this series, the Protestant Reformation focused on five "battle cries" around the doctrine of salvation. The five battle cries were:

***Sola Scriptura* – Scripture Alone,**

***Solus Christus* – Christ Alone,**

***Sola Gratia* – Grace Alone,**

***Sola Fide* – Faith Alone, and**

***Sola Deo Gloria* – God's Glory Alone.**

Let me be clear that this is not just a study of history. We are in need of reformation today. The problems aren't exactly the same, but most of them have the same root. The battle cry that we will focus on today is *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture Alone. The church today must be brought back to this fundamental truth. So many American churches have given in to the temptation of pragmatism. We talked a small amount about pragmatism in the last message, but I want to bring it up again. Dr. Albert Mohler defines pragmatism this way: “[Pragmatism is] the idea that truth is a matter of social negotiation and that ideas are merely instrumental tools whose truthfulness will be determined by whether they meet the particular needs of the present time.” [Dr. Al Mohler in *Forward of God's Word Alone*, Matthew Barrett, page 14] To put it another way, pragmatism says, “Truth is whatever works to accomplish our goals.” Sadly, many of the fastest growing churches today marginalize the Word of God at best, and at worst just ignore it and substitute “life lessons” that will result in a happier, more contented life.” The church in America (as well as Canada and Europe) is in desperate need of putting into practice, *Sola Scriptura*! The church must forsake the world's wisdom, the world's agenda, and the world's methods, and unleash the powerful Word of God to do the work only it can do. We must confess with the reformers that when Scripture speaks, God speaks. This hurting confused world doesn't need entertaining “relevant” talks; it needs to hear from God.

I. The Authority of Scripture

The key issue in the Reformation was authority. What is *authority*? The dictionary says that authority is the right or power to enforce rules or give orders. The Scripture tells that all authority belongs to God. For authority to be effective, it must be backed up with power. The God who has all authority is the One who is omnipotent, all powerful. God the Son, Jesus Christ said in Matthew 28:18b: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Exactly what do we mean when we say that the Bible is authoritative? Here is Wayne Grudem's explanation of the authority of Scripture: “The Authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's word in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 73]

There was a problem that the reformers faced when they proclaimed the authority of Scripture alone. The church (and this is still true today) had a dual source of authority. The church leaders in Luther's day readily confessed that the Bible had authority. It was the *sola* (only) they had a problem with. The church officially claimed that the Bible was one source of authority, but there were also the traditions of the church, church councils, and the infallible declarations of the various popes when they spoke “*ex cathedra*” which is literally “from the chair” meaning the chair of Peter who they claim to have a direct line of authority from.

Here was the problem with this dual source of authority: the traditions of the church often conflicted with the Scriptures. When that happened, the traditions including the dictates of the Pope took precedence over the Scriptures. The real authority in the Roman church (both in the 16th century and still today) is the church – its councils, traditions, and papal dictates. Here are some examples of contradictions and in each case the church took precedence over the Scriptures:

- The Bible teaches that all have sinned except Jesus. Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 gives us the one exception to that “all” “He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son, Jesus Christ] *who knew no sin* to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Tradition, however, teaches that Mary was also sinless. That necessitated the Catholic doctrine called “The Immaculate Conception.” In answer to the question as to why Jesus did not

receive a sinful nature from Mary, the church's answer is that Mary was also free from sin. The Bible nowhere teaches or even implies that. The result of the church teaching that Mary was without sin was the actual worship of Mary and directing prayers to her. There are all sorts of other problems that the teaching of the immaculate conception of Mary brought on.

- The Bible teaches that Christ's sacrifice was once for all. Hebrews 10:10: "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." However, tradition teaches that the priest sacrifices Christ again and again on the altar at mass.
- The Bible says that *all* Christians are saints and priests. Ephesians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Tradition says that saints and priests are special castes within Christianity.
- The Bible says that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Tradition says that Mary is co-mediator with Christ.

That is a sampling of the "equal authorities" that contradict the Scriptures. There are also the doctrines from popes or councils of purgatory, the treasury of merit, and others. In addition to the traditions contradicting Scriptures, some of the traditions contradicted other traditions. The Reformers said, "Not tradition and Scripture; ***Sola Scriptura***. The reformers said there is only one source of authority; it is not a fallible church, but the infallible Scriptures. Steven Lawson gives a good summary. "There are only three possible forms of spiritual authority. First, there is the authority of the Lord and His written revelation. Second, there is the authority of the church and its leaders. Third, there is the authority of human reason. When the Reformers cried "Scripture alone," they were expressing their commitment to the authority of God as expressed through the Bible... The Reformation was essentially a crisis over which authority would have primacy... The Reformers believed that the authority belonged to Scripture *alone*." [Steven Lawson, *The Reformation and the Men Behind It*]

There are at least two companion truths about the Scripture that flows from the truth of the authority of Scripture.

A. Scripture Is Inspired

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16a (ESV): "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." If Scripture is breathed out by God, it must come from God and since God is perfect, then what He breathes out is perfect. God used human vessels to write down His word, but it was breathed out by Him. The claim of the Scriptures is that all the words of Scripture are God's words. The human instruments of God's breathed out word often gave testimony that they were writing God's word. That is evidenced by the often-used phrases such as "God says," "the Holy Spirit says," "thus says the Lord," and an often-used phrase in the New Testament is "it is written..." Listen to the boldness of the Apostle Paul when he writes in 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you *are the Lord's commandment*." The Scriptures are breathed out by God through godly men. 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV): "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

B. Scripture Is Inerrant

Inerrancy means that the Scriptures do not err. I am not saying that translations are inerrant. Inerrancy means that Scripture in its original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 90]

Our purpose here is not to go into all the types of speech that are used and apparent contradictions. We've done that at previous times and there are many excellent resources. My purpose here is to state why the Reformers believed and were even willing to die for the truth of *Sola Scriptura*. Charles Spurgeon summarizes my views when he said, "We will not have it that God, in His holy book, makes mistakes about matters of history or of science, any more than He does upon the great truths of salvation. If the Lord be God, He must be infallible. And if He can be described as in error in the little respects of human history and science, He cannot be trusted in the greater matters" [Charles Spurgeon, *2200 Quotations from Charles Spurgeon*, page 24]

II. The Sufficiency of Scripture

Because the Scriptures are authoritative, inspired, and inerrant, they are sufficient. Here is the question: Do we believe that God has given us all that we need to obey Him and accomplish our reason for existence as given in the Bible?

The great deficiency in the church today is that we don't seem to really believe that the Bible is sufficient. We live in days like those described in 2 Timothy 3:5a: "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power..." Many leaders of the church profess to believe that the Scriptures are inspired, but they don't seem to believe that they are sufficient. Is the Bible enough or do we have to come up with gimmicks to reach people? Is the Bible sufficient or do we have to have "skyscraper sermons" – one story on top of another? Do we really believe Psalm 19:7-11 which says:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Let us look at three specific areas where the Scriptures are sufficient.

A. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Evangelism

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." Because we have forgotten the battle cry of the Reformation, *Sola Scriptura*, we have begun to trust man made methods and gimmicks to get "decisions" and grow the church. The only way that the church will see true conversions is when the Word of God is proclaimed.

Adrian Rogers used to say, "Point people to the Word of God and then get out of the way." The ONLY way the Spirit works to regenerate spiritually dead people is through the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23: "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." The instrument that God uses to draw people to Himself, open their blinded minds, grant them repentance, and enable them to place their faith in Him, is the Word of God. It is not

testimonies, unless that testimony is saturated with the Word of God. It is not music; it is not emotion tugging stories and appeals; it is not manipulation and psychological methods during an invitation time; it is not signs and wonders. God's "method" is the message of the Gospel. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The church needs reformation to see that it is not slick marketing, being relevant (whatever that nebulous word means), slick emotion provoking music, and psychological manipulation that accomplishes conversions; it is the Word of God. The Word of God is sufficient for evangelism.

B. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Sanctification

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for *training in righteousness*; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The word "sanctification" means to be set apart. Sometimes it is used to refer to salvation since salvation is when we are set apart as new creations in Christ to glorify God. When I use the word, "sanctification" I am using it in the sense of being set apart from sin and growing in Christ likeness. In other words, it is spiritual growth. Today, the church is largely teaching sanctification by one of two methods. First, there is what I call "sanctification by doing." This teaching is that we become Christ like by doing certain things like helping the poor, feeding the hungry, fighting racism and social injustice. Those things are the *result* of a growth in Christ likeness; they don't cause it. The second method of sanctification is by emotional experience. People hear tear jerking stories or emotional manipulation and walk down an aisle or come forward for some other decision, but it doesn't last. Let me tell you God's method of sanctification – the Word of God!! It is as we see what happened to us at the cross when we were identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and reckon on that as being true. If an immature Christian would just camp out in Romans 6-8 for the first year of their Christian life and reckon as true all that these chapters say about their identity and their position in Christ, and then walk in the Spirit as chapter eight details, they would grow like a weed spiritually! Out of that growth through the Word of God, they would be zealous for the good works that God has ordained for them (Ephesians 2:10).

C. The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Guidance

2 Timothy 3:16 (AMP): "Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action)."

In the church today, we have largely forsaken the clear exposition of the Scriptures and use psychology, mysticism, "common sense" (which is often contrary to Bible sense). The Word of God tells us the will of God in broad strokes and to fill in the details, he tells us in Psalms 37:4 (NKJV): "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." That means that when you are delighting in Him and obeying His revealed guidance, He will put his desire for you in the details of life in your heart so that they become your desires. Don't first run to a human counselor for guidance; run to the Word of God. Then if you are still struggling, go to a counselor who will help you see God's guidance from the Word of God.

Conclusion

Could it be that you need reformation? Here is what you must do – immerse yourself in the Scriptures. Become fanatical about it. They are sufficient.

