



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

Back to the Basics

Sermon Notes

The Founding of Grace Reformed Baptist Church

2 Timothy 3:14-17

August 9, 2009

- Last week we began a series entitled *Back to the Basics*, as we approach the five year anniversary of Grace Reformed Baptist Church. The purpose of this series is to examine the tenets upon which GRBC was founded, and to remind each of us of these fundamental truths as we look to the future of our local congregation.
- Last week, we examined the doctrinal and confessional basis of GRBC.

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| I. | A Confessional Element |
| II. | Reflection on that Confession |
| III. | A Cultivation of a Set of Virtues that is Grounded in the first two elements. |

- Over the next two weeks, we will examine the first of the “five solas” and how it relates to the foundation of our congregation:
 - ***Sola Scriptura*** (“by Scripture alone”)
 - ***Sola Fide*** (“[justification] by faith alone”)
 - ***Sola Gratia*** (“by grace alone”)
 - ***Solus Christus*** (“through the work of Christ alone”)
 - ***Soli Deo Gloria*** (“to the Glory of God Alone”)
- As we examine the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, we will do so by focusing on six characteristics of Scripture and how they relate to our congregation:

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| I. | Revelation and Illumination |
| II. | Inspiration |
| III. | Infallibility |

- IV. Sufficiency and Necessity
- V. Perspicuity [Clarity]
- VI. Finality

I. Revelation (General and Special) and Illumination

A. Revelation

According to theologian Robert Culver, *revelation* is simply “the act of God in making Himself known” to man.

- Robert Reymond writes, “The primary Old Testament verb expressing the revelatory idea is *galah*, occurring some twenty-two times, the root meaning of which appears to be ‘nakedness,’ and which, when applied to revelation, seems to suggest the removal of obstacles to ‘perception’...”
- It is most certainly true that, apart from God’s revelation of Himself to us, we would know nothing about Him.
- Yet, theologians have often distinguished between two *types* of divine revelation: (1) **General Revelation** and (2) **Special Revelation**.
 - (1) **General Revelation** is God’s revelation of Himself that is evident to all men, without exception. This is typically understood to be **Creation**.

“²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:20-21

- (2) **Special Revelation**, on the other hand, is typically considered to be that revelation of God that is given *specifically, particularly, and specially* to God’s people. This *special revelation* of God is the canon of Scripture.
- And whereas General Revelation is sufficient for condemnation (Romans 1:20-21); Special Revelation (i.e., Scripture) is sufficient *and* necessary for salvation.

B. Illumination

- Yet, for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s revelation is understood **only** through the *illuminating work of the Person of the Holy Spirit*.

- ❑ The work of the Holy Spirit can be likened to the need one has for light in a dark room. That is, one may be able to read, and have a book in his or her possession; yet, remain in the dark. Without the presence of light, it matters not how well one can read in the dark.
- ❑ Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit is like a shining light in the darkness, thus enabling a person in the dark to read.
- ❑ Therefore, **illumination** is absolutely essential if one is to *understand* God’s divine **special revelation**.
- ❑ This illuminating work of the Holy Spirit also constitutes an **authentication** in the heart of the believer:

“The Scriptures authenticate themselves to Christian believers through the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to recognize, and bow before, divine realities. It is he who enlightens us to receive the man Jesus as God’s incarnate Son, and our Saviour; similarly, it is he who enlightens us to receive sixty-six pieces of human writing as God’s inscripturated Word, given to make us ‘wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus’ (2 Timothy 3:15). In both cases, this enlightening is not a private revelation of something that has not been made public, but the opening of minds sinfully closed so that they receive evidence to which they were previously impervious.” J.I. Packer

II. Inspiration and Infallibility

A. Inspiration

- ❑ As we now turn to God’s *special revelation*, we must realize that it is God’s Word and, as such, it is **inspired by Him**,

“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.”
2 Timothy 3:16

- ❑ This passage clearly states that “**All Scripture is inspired by God...**”
- ❑ Yet, before we explore more clearly what it means to be **inspired**, we first ask the question, “**What is Scripture?**”
 - Certainly in this context, the Apostle Paul is referring to the **Old Testament**. This is clear from the Verses prior to 2 Timothy 3:16 (**Verse 14-15**):

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Consider, as well, **Christ's authentication of the Old Testament as Scripture:**

Luke 24:25-27, 44-47:

And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in *all the Scriptures*. ⁴⁴Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the **Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand *the Scriptures*, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" [emphasis added]

- It is here that authenticates all 39 books of the Old Testament canon.
- In fact, the three sections Christ speaks of here (1. Law of Moses (Torah); 2. Prophets (Major and Minor); and 3. the Psalms) correspond exactly to the Old Testament we hold to today.
- Yet, not only this, but Christ spent His entire ministry emphasizing the authority of the Old Testament and His fulfillment of it.

Matthew 5:17-18

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Matthew 7:12

¹²"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴"But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' ³⁷And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"

- Consider as well that Jesus **overcame the temptation of the Devil** by quoting Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; 6:13 (see Matthew 4:4, 7, 10), stating, “as it is written” (which is equivalent to “God says”) (Matthew 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31).
- Not only this, but His dying words were even a quotation from the Scriptures (Psalm 22:1).
- Biblical scholar Reinhold Seeberg writes, “Jesus himself describes and employs the Old Testament as infallible authority (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).
- However, not only does Christ Himself authenticate the authority of the Old Testament, but the New Testament writers do as well.
 - Again, in **2 Timothy 3:14-16**, the Apostle Paul refers to the Old Testament as “sacred writings” and “Scripture.”
 - The Apostle Peter writes, in **2 Peter 1:21**:²¹ “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
 - There are many other passages in the New Testament that declare the Old Testament as God’s Word (Luke 1:70; 24:25; John 5:45-47; Acts 3:18, 21; 4:25; 13:47; 28:25; Romans 1:2; 3:2; 9:17; 1 Corinthians 9:8-10; Hebrews 1:1-2, 6-7).

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- However, the Old Testament are not the only **Scriptures**. The New Testament is equally inspired, and it authenticates itself as such.

1 Timothy 5:18:

“For the Scripture says, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

- In this passage, Paul quotes from both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 17:10, referring to them both as “Scripture.”
 - Deuteronomy 25:4:
“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”
 - Luke 17:10:
“Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for **the laborer is worthy of his wages**. Do not keep moving from house to house.”
[emphasis added]

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.”

[emphasis added]

2 Peter 3:15-16:

“and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; **just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you**, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also **the rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction.”

[emphasis added]

- Here, the Apostle Peter indicates that Paul’s writings are Scripture, including them with “the *rest of the Scriptures*.”

- ***Read also*** Galatians 1:11-2:21; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 1 Peter 1:10-12

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- Consider also that the Apostles told the readers of their epistles to circulate their letters among the Churches as ***authoritative revelation***.

Colossians 4:16

¹⁶And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

1 Thessalonians 5:27

²⁷I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

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- Notice, as well, the Apostle Paul claims divine authority, as having a “word from the Lord”:

1 Thessalonians 4:15

¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

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- Yet, if all Scripture (the 66 Books of the Old and New Testament) is **inspired**, what does it mean to be ***inspired***?
 - In **2 Timothy 3:16**, the word “inspired” or “God-breathed” is the Greek word *theopneustos* (θεόπνευστός).

- According to B.B. Warfield, “God breathed the Scriptures out [from Himself]” and, therefore, to translate the Greek word *theopneustos* as “inspired” is “a distinct and even misleading mistranslation.”
- Warfield continues, “The Greek word in this passage – θεοπνευστος – very distinctly does not mean ‘inspired by God.’ ... The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of *inspiring* or of *inspiration*: [rather] it speaks only of a ‘spiring’ or ‘spiration.’ What it says of Scripture is, not that it is ‘breathed into by God’ or is the product of Divine ‘inbreathing’ into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, ‘Godbreathed,’ the product of the creative breath of God. **In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product without any indication of how God has operated in producing them.**”
- As such, the Words of Scripture are not simply “inspired” [as we would possibly understand the word in our modern usage], but **the very words of God Himself.**
- According to Warfield, “Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and therefore, perfectly infallible.”

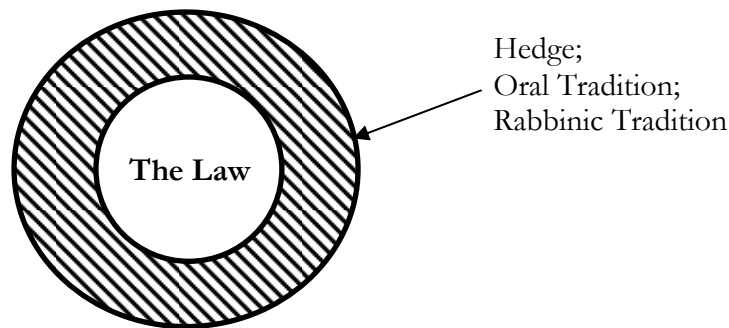
B. Infallibility

- Therefore, as a result of being “God-breathed”, “All Scripture is inerrant and infallible.”
- Robert Reymond in his great work, *The New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, writes, “By ‘inerrancy’ we intend essentially the same thing as ‘infallibility,’ namely, that **the Bible does not err in any of its affirmations, whether those affirmations be in the spheres of spiritual realities or morals, history or science, and is therefore incapable of teaching error.** Because the Bible is God’s Word, its assertions are as true as if God spoke to man today directly from heaven.”

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- It is crucial, however, that one understand that, with the concept of **biblical infallibility**, the Bible is inerrant (without error) only in the areas it addresses.
- Thus, as John MacArthur rightly states, “Scripture is inspired and inerrant **in everything it teaches and reports.**”

- ❑ Yet, herein lies the error of the fundamentalism movement of the last century (as well as the error of many of us today): We attempt to speak *authoritatively* in areas the Scriptures never address.
- ❑ This was precisely what the error of the Pharisees was in the first century.
- ❑ Recall the Pharisaical “hedge.”
 - The Pharisees emphasized a commitment to obeying the Law (a commitment that, at first, appears noble). However, in an effort to demonstrate their reverence to the Law, they created a “hedge”, rooted in tradition, around the Law.
 - **The hedge was a set of extra-biblical commandments that were stricter than the Law itself.** Consequently, so the logic appeared to go, one would seek to keep the “higher standard” (the hedge), and consequently, would never get close to infringing upon or breaking the Law itself.



- Example of the Law vs. the Rabbinical Tradition
 - Law: Remember the Sabbath and Keep it Holy.
 - Rabbinical Tradition: Is it lawful to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath?
- To ensure that the Sabbath Law was not broken, Jewish rabbis defined thirty-nine types of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath:

“The main classes of work are forty save one (39); sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing wool, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain to another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one (39). (Sabbat 7:2).”

Also, “(On the Sabbath) a man may borrow of his fellow jars of wine or jars of oil, provided that he does not say to him, ‘Lend me them.’” (Shab. 23:1). This would imply a transaction, and a transaction might involve writing, and writing was work and therefore forbidden.

- ❑ Yet as “pious” and even “noble” as such a “hedge” may at first appear, consider how blasphemous it actually is. The Law reflects the holy character and nature of God, and, consequently, obedience to the Law reflects obedience, submission and conformity to the character of the LORD. Therefore, when we demand that others conform to our moral standards (even if they are *based on* the Scriptures), then we are, in essence, elevating ourselves to the level of God.
- ❑ And this is the essence of LEGALISM: attempting to enforce our own set of standards with the same passion and intensity as God’s standards (i.e., the Law).
- ❑ In today’s society, these standards may include (but certainly are not limited to):
 - How one chooses to dress while in church
 - How a woman should dress
 - How often (outside of the Lord’s Day) one should go to church
 - Whether or not one should send their child to public school or private school.
 - What style of music a church should adopt
 - Whether or not a woman should work outside of her home
 - Issues surrounding the consumption of alcohol
- ❑ Therefore, where the Word of God speaks, it does so *authoritatively*; however, where it is silent, we should **never** attempt to speak with authority.

III. Authority

- ❑ Finally, we must examine the concept of Biblical authority. If the Bible is the infallible, inspired revelation of God, then it is most assuredly the very authority of God as well.
- ❑ Author and theologian Wayne Grudem writes, “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”
- ❑ This is an absolutely essential concept for the modern-day Christian to understand.
- ❑ In fact, this is exactly why at GRBC we state that “The Word of God is our sole authority, governing all matters of faith (what we believe) and of practice (what we do).”

- ❑ **Yet, it has not always been this way. In fact, today, very few professing Christians would agree with this statement.**

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- ❑ The concept of **authority**, was at the very heart of the Protestant Reformation. The question was then (and remains for all to ponder now): “What is the source of authority in the life of a believer?”
- ❑ According to the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century (and today as well), authority is not based on Scripture alone.
- ❑ Rather, as the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”

- ❑ Consequently, this is why the Reformers taught the doctrine of ***Sola Scriptura***, emphasizing the authority of Scriptures alone.
- ❑ However, most professing evangelicals today do not embrace ***Sola Scriptura***. Rather, they adhere to something more like *prima Scriptura*.
- ❑ In fact, this reality demonstrates the profound influence of Wesleyan or Holiness theology on modern-day evangelicalism.
- ❑ The late Wesleyan theologian Albert Outler stated:

“The great Protestant watchwords of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* were in fact fundamentals in Wesley’s formulation of a doctrine of biblical authority. But early and late in his career, Wesley interpreted *solus* to mean ‘primarily’ rather than ‘solely’ or ‘exclusively.’ In Latin, *prima*—rather than *solus*—is the appropriate adjective for modifying nouns such as faith and scripture.”

- Therefore, Wesley’s understanding of *prima* (rather than *sola*) Scriptura, led him to the rough formulation of what Outler later referred to as the “Wesleyan quadrilateral.”
- This “quadrilateral” represents the “primacy of scriptural authority along with the secondary – albeit genuine – religious authority of tradition, reason and experience.”

- Yet, unfortunately, in modern-Christendom, authority is understood *much more* along the lines of the Wesleyan quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience) rather than ***sola Scriptura***.
- This is, once again, why we planted Grace Reformed Baptist Church five years ago: to recover the truth of ***sola Scriptura*** in the life of the local congregation.
- Consequently, may our lives reflect such a commitment to and dependence upon the Word of God alone as the sole and final authority in matters of both faith and practice.

“[The people of God] do not know what is in the Bible: they could tell you what is in the *Churchman's Penny*, or the *Christian's Penny*, or the *Churchman's Magazine*, or the *Wesleyan Magazine*, or the *Baptist Magazine*, or the *Evangelical Magazine*, and all that; but there is one old magazine, a magazine of arms, a magazine of wealth, that they forget to read—that old-fashioned book called the Bible... Oh! that we [are] wise, to give the Bible the largest share of our time, and ever to continue reading it, both by day and night, that we might be as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season! Let us remember, as ministers of the Gospel, what [one man] beautifully said; ‘Depend upon it,’ said he, ‘it is God's Word, not man's comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;’ and I have marked, that if ever we have a conversion at any time, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the text, or to some Scripture quoted in the sermon, than to any trite or original [comment] by the preacher. It is God's Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free; it is God's Word instrumentally that saves souls; and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone.”

Charles Spurgeon