

The Restoration of the Word of God  
**Sola Scriptura**

2 Tim 3:12-17

**<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and 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. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

Prayer:

*Our Father in heaven, we are gathered together today under the authority of your Word and in the presence of the risen Christ. May your Holy Spirit be among us to instruct our minds and build us up in our holy faith. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

In the year 1517 the Christian church in Europe was in serious trouble. She was in the middle of a centuries-long drift away from the authoritative truth of the Bible. False doctrines had crept in and were sapping the life out of the church, out of its people.

The truths of the Holy Scriptures as to how a person could come to know God and be saved from their sins had gotten covered over and hidden under the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman system of religion had taken over the driver's seat. Its system distorted much Biblical truth and made rules the people had to keep if they ever hoped to have a chance to go to heaven.

The sovereign grace of a God who rescues sinners and makes them into new men and women with new hearts, was replaced by a man-centered system which had pushed Christ aside and put itself in his place.

Into this situation something radical had to happen to rescue and restore God's church to the way it was in those early years after Christ had risen from the dead and poured out his Holy Spirit on this people. What was the church like when it first began? We read in Acts 2:42 that after the Day of Pentecost the newly baptized believers met together and **<sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**

In the early church in Jerusalem for their weekly gatherings there were four major things they did:

First of all, they listened to “the apostles’ doctrine” as the eleven apostles, Peter, John, James – and the others, instructed the people regarding the life and teachings of Christ. Then they would break bread, which meant they would share the Lord’s Supper together, and they would pray together. In addition, they would fellowship with one another – sharing their lives and rejoicing in the salvation they had received in Christ. What a blessed and happy time it was!

So in the early years of the church it was the Word of God, taught by the apostles, that determined everything the church believed and practiced.

By the end of the first century all the gospels and letters of the New Testament had been written and were being circulated among the churches. These New Testament documents, along with the Old Testament, became the authoritative source for all that the churches believed and practice.

As century after century passed by, the supreme authority of the scriptures began to be eroded as foreign teachings and practices were gradually introduced into the church.

***Then beginning in 590 AD under Pope Gregory I the Roman Catholic*** Church began to gradually take on more of the form that we see today. Over the following centuries the Church began to adopt teachings and practices that were not in the Bible. These were teachings brought into the church by Popes and bishops.

The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church began to turn the people’s attention and faith away from Jesus Christ and to itself as the giver or withholder of salvation for the people. The Church’s own teachings supplanted and overrode Jesus’ authority as is seen in the Bible. Two other authorities were added: the first was the church’s traditions. This would include practices like praying the rosary (a set of beads that were counted) and praying to Mary, the saints, and angels. The third source of authority in the Catholic church was the Magisterium, “the official teaching authority of the Church, constituted by the Pope and the bishops in union with him.”

So these two other authorities were added to the Bible. The Bible was no longer supreme. The Magisterium, the decisions and teachings of Popes and bishops, became the real authority in the Church.

For example, The Council of Florence in 1439 declared the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal primacy:

"We likewise define that the holy Apostolic See [government], and the Roman Pontiff [Pope], hold the primacy throughout the entire world; and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church.'

We Protestant Bible believers, do not accept this statement. Jesus, not Popes and bishops, is the head of his church on earth and he is present with us by the Holy Spirit.

But in the early 1500's one of the greatest problems in the Roman Catholic Church, and most people in Europe were born into this church, was that the contents of the Bible were hidden from the people because the Bible being used was called the Vulgate, an old version of the Bible written in the Latin language. And the whole worship service, the Mass, as it was called, was conducted in Latin. The bottom line was that the people could not understand the Bible nor anything else in the service of the Mass.

The church forbade the translation, reading or use of the Bible in the common languages of the people such as French, German, or English.

Listen to the official decree of the church issued at the Council of Trent in 1546: "The same council...ordains and declares that the old Latin Vulgate Edition, which, in use for so many hundred years, has been approved by the Church...and that no one dare or presume under any pretext whatsoever to reject it."

But what does the Bible itself say about this? Does God expect his people to hear his Word in their own language and understand it? Listen to Nehemiah 8:2-3:

***<sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.***

We see here that the people could "understand" and the people were "attentive to the Book of the Law."

In the New Testament we read such texts as Colossians 4:16:

***And 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.***

It is clear here that the letters of the apostles were to be read in the churches so the people could hear and understand and receive the teaching of the apostles.

Hear also from another New Testament text, written by the Apostle John, Revelation 1:3:

***<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.***

Who does the Bible say here are the “blessed” ones? Those who read the Word of God, who hear it and who keep what is written in it.

The Protestant Reformers during this time were men who through the study of the scriptures saw clearly that so much of Roman Catholic teaching had departed far from the Bible – it had drifted far from the shore of Biblical truth.

So the Reformers, men such as Martin Luther in Germany, John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, and William Tyndale in England rejected the false teachings that had arisen in the Roman Catholic church, they translated the Bible into the languages of the people, and opened up the true teaching of the Word of God to the people.

They advocated for a return to the Bible alone as the supreme authority in what the Christian church believes and practices. The Latin term for this position is **Sola Scriptura – the Scriptures Alone**.

What is to be our real and final authority in Christ’s church? It is the Bible and the Bible alone - Sola Scriptura! The Scriptures alone!

When Martin Luther was put on trial in 1521 before Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and told to recant and deny his belief in the authority of the scriptures, responded:

*“Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason -I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other -my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”*

Likewise the supremacy of the Word of God is clear as we read from the **French Confession of Faith 1559, written by John Calvin**

“We believe that the Word contained in these books has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from him alone, and not from men. And inasmuch as it is the rule of all truth, containing all that is necessary for the service of God and for our salvation, it is not lawful for men, nor even for angels, to add to it, to take away from it, or to change it. Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations, or edicts, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but, on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them.”

In the church of Jesus Christ, all that we believe and practice must come from the scriptures. The scriptures alone are our authority. They are totally sufficient and clear to instruct us in the nature of God, his will for our lives, and how we can be saved from our sins through faith in his Son.

Let's look at a text today from the New Testament that affirms Sola Scriptura. This is Paul's letter to his son in the faith, Timothy:

2 Tim 3:12-17

**<sup>15</sup> and 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. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

There are three things I want to point out to us today about how this text demonstrates Sola Scriptura, the scriptures alone. This passage shows us how crucial and powerful the Word of God is.

### **1. The Scriptures are able to make us wise in knowing the way of salvation through faith in Jesus. – Verse 15.**

Notice it says, the sacred writings are able to do something. They have the ability, the power. They are not powerless, they are not weak, they are not ambiguous. They are able to do something which no other book, no video, on earth can do – they can give us the wisdom we need to know the way of salvation through faith in Jesus.

We all have a big problem with sin. We were born with it and don't have the power to overcome it. But God has the power. He sent his Son to rescue us from the power of sin and from its punishment.

How can we find the way to be rescued from the punishment that our sins deserve? It is only in the Christian scriptures that we find the answer - it is by repenting of our sins and by believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Secondly, this text say in verse 16:

### **II. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God...**

The Christian scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, did not originate in the thoughts of men. They came from God's thoughts and God's purpose and the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. God is the one who "breathed out," through men the message he wanted to communicate to humanity. He put the thoughts that he wanted to communicate in the minds of the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament and they wrote them down. They wrote in their own languages and in their own culture and with their own personalities but what they preached and wrote was governed and directed by God's invisible Spirit so that what they wrote was exactly what God wanted to communicate.

Someone has said that when we read the scriptures, it is really God preaching to us.

Because God the Holy Spirit gave us the Scriptures through the instrumentality of prophets and apostles, the Bible carries the very authority of God himself. We must therefore heed them and obey them. We cannot allow anything else to take their place. No other teaching, no other religion, no other spiritual information.

Jesus often used the phrase "It is written" when he talked to people. What he meant by this term is that what is written in the Old Testament is there by the hand of God and because it comes from God it is to be heeded and obeyed. The same is true of the New Testament scriptures.

When we read the Bible we are getting the message that God himself wants us to know. The Scriptures lead us to salvation. They are inspired by God and carry the authority of God himself, as if God was speaking directly to us.

So in this text, we see first of all, the scriptures are able to lead us to faith in Jesus, and, secondly, because they are "God-breathed," inspired by God, they carry the very authority of God himself.

**III. Thirdly, we see that the scriptures are profitable for every kind of spiritual growth.** They are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The key to spiritual growth and maturity is in knowing the scriptures. They shape and mold us into the kind of people who bring glory to God. One of the chief ways the Lord gets the teaching of his scriptures into our minds and hearts is through congregational worship and instruction. The Pastors in the churches teach us the scriptures, helping equip us to be knowledgeable, humble, and effective servants of Christ.

Without water and fertilizer, and sunlight and getting rid of weeds and insects, a vegetable garden will produce little. So we too need the nourishment of the Word of God to grow and mature as Christians.

We treasure this period in church history called the Reformation because the church was rescued from its departure from the Word of God by the recovery of the authority, sufficiency and clarity of the Word of God.

The Word of God, the Bible, was no longer hidden but was made known in the languages of the people.

Teachings and practices that were contrary to the Word of God were rejected and Biblical teaching and worship was restored to the church.

What does this mean for us today?

1. We do not intend to retreat or back off from the strong stand on the supreme authority of the scriptures that the Reformers recovered. A more recent statement by conservative, Evangelical churches is the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy from 1978:

“Holy Scripture, being God’s own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises.”

2. We must believe in the one to whom the scriptures point to – the Lord Jesus Christ – and take him as our Lord and Savior.
3. We should be thankful that we have our Bibles in our own languages so we can read and hear and understand the Word of the Lord.
4. We must take up the sacred writings and read them. They are a great feast, a great treasure. God has provided it for us, often by means of martyrs who shed their blood to make them known in the languages of the people.
5. Since salvation is found in no other name under heaven but the name of Jesus, we must labor to make the Word of God known, to make the Savior known, to our generation, to the people around us.

Prayer:

Gracious God, you have not left us in ignorance and darkness but have sent the light of your truth to us through the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments. May their transforming power continually work in our lives to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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Oct. 29, 2023

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