

Their Sola Scriptura Part 1

Errors of the Reformers

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Matthew chapter fifteen, please. I am beginning a series of messages on the Errors of the Reformers. I want to say, first, that I have many Christian friends who follow after Reformed theology and I want to emphasize that I do not believe a person has to be a member of a Baptist church in order to go to heaven. We do believe that every born-again child of God is in the family of God. I do believe, though, it is our responsibility as pastors of the Lord's churches to set forth the truth of God as we understand it and as God has given it to us by His Word through the Holy Spirit.

I am doing this series on the Errors of Reformers in order to try and help you here as a congregation and others who may hear these messages, to distinguish between what we believe the Bible teaches to be the truth of God and some false teachings that others have taken up. It is called Reformed theology because it is the primary doctrine of those who began to come out of the Reformation. The Reformation beginning with, Martin Luther and John Calvin and taking up with the doctrines of grace, election and predestination, although John Calvin never himself wrote extensively on the doctrines of grace as some would say he did. It was more or less his followers and students that went on and formalized what's referred to as the "Five Points of Calvinism."

We find these doctrines to be compatible in many ways with what we as Baptists, especially Primitive Baptists, believe. We do believe in the sovereignty of God. We do believe in the doctrines of God's electing grace. We believe that Jesus Christ died a particular death, a death that was effectual in the salvation of His elect people. We do not believe that Jesus Christ died for the sins of all the world. By that I mean, every single individual, but rather we believe that His death was effectual only for the elect of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. When we read the writings of the Reformers and those who follow after Reformed theology as they write about these doctrines of sovereign grace, we find many areas of agreement, although there are some things of which we even differ greatly and on that subject, we'll talk about later.

I want you to understand and to explain to you that I am not hostile against those who follow after Reformed theology. Yet many times I've said to them, "You should not call your doctrines Reformed theology. If they are biblical, you should call them Bible theology or biblical theology," and that's what I hope that we as Primitive Baptists follow

after, the doctrines set forth in the Word of God. I challenge all of us from time-to-time that we examine everything that we believe by the Bible and that we should follow it as close as possible, as much as we have understanding by the Holy Spirit of God.

In the 15th chapter of Matthew, the Lord speaks to the scribes and Pharisees and He gives us here a very serious warning. While He is speaking primarily to the scribes and the Pharisees, it is a principle by which we should examine ourselves. Verse 1, *“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”*

This was not just to simply wash your hands in some water, but it was a very detailed way in which the Jewish elders had taught this washing was to be done. You did not just wash your hands, you did it in a very ceremonious way so that you were washing both physically and ceremoniously. Of course, they didn't have the soaps that we have today but there was a strict manner and practice of washing before you eat. So, why do not your disciples wash their hands according to the traditions of the elders? The word “tradition” is the word “teachings” of the elders. *“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Verse 3) “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say,”* your traditions, your interpretation of God's word, *“Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”*(Verse 4)

Here is the principle the Lord challenged them with: “You are making your traditions to be primary over the commandment of God.” Now really what is involved here when the Lord said *“honoring your mother and father”* is not only that the children would be respectful, but it also means to financially support and honor the parents. They didn't have, as we have today, a lot of the social programs whereby the parents are taken care of by the government. In so doing, we have diminished or neglected the responsibility of children to care for their parents, even after they leave home.

What was happening, the Pharisees, those who were responsible for the teachings of the law, and the scribes were saying that if you can take this money and give it to the temple, to give it to support of the priest, then you are free from your obligation to support your parents. Well, the Lord rebukes them for that and He says *“You have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”*

In verse 7, He says, *“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

You will note here the principle and the policy that our Lord put into place which is: that unless it is biblical worship, unless we are teaching biblical principles and truths, while

our worship may be very devout, it is vain worship. That's the problem we have throughout the world today. As I've said before, the world is not void of religion. Wherever you go in the world, you will find some form of religion, especially here in America where we have an abundance of many different kinds of religion. Christianity is now well-established here in America and we have many so-called Christian denominations, unfortunately. I say unfortunately, because I believe that it is a tool of the Devil whereby he has confused many people as to what is the truth. There is only one God; there is only one Bible; there is only one way of salvation, so truth is not diverse but is very singular. It is absolute, it's according to what "*thus saith the Lord.*"

The Paul says in Corinthians, that God is not the author of confusion. Many people today, the vast majority of people throughout the world, are confused about what is truth. So that confusion is not of God but it is something that Satan has done very successfully to bring about world-wide confusion.

Our Lord here then sets forth the principle, in verse 8, "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*"

It is, indeed, a problem trying to be able to discern and to decide what is truth and what is error especially when people are using the same kind of terminology that we would use as God's people. For instance, the term "born-again". That has been used in many different ways. It is a term that is applied to things not even religious, to be born-again. We understand it to be the immediate work of the Holy Spirit of God whereby He makes a person to be a new creature in Christ Jesus and they become a follower after Christ and old things pass away and behold all things become new unto them. But the word "born-again," as I said, even the world has said sometimes that the universe is born-again. It is ridiculous how it is used so many times. That's a problem that we have to deal with and be sure that our terms are properly understood.

The word "church" for instance is so abused and used in such ways that it has been corrupted in its definition. It is a principle that the more common a word becomes, the more it loses its true definition and the more corrupted its definition becomes. For instance, the word "family." We used to have an idea of what a family was: a family was composed of a husband and a wife and some children but today that term has greatly been abused and it can be either two men or two women who can be a family. Well, that's not a biblical family, so when people use terms that are similar to us and yet are terms that we have a different definition, it's hard sometimes to understand that there's an error in their use of the word.

So, I want to try and set forth for us in these series of sermons what I entitled "The Errors of the Reformers." John Gill said that Fullerism, the doctrines and teachings begun by Andrew Fuller, who was himself a Strict Particular Baptist back in the 18th century. Gill said that Fullerism was the worst evil that Satan had ever conspired to bring about among the Lord's churches. The reason why he said that was because Andrew Fuller, who was knowledgeable about the doctrines that Particular Baptist's believed, used the same

terminology, but he gave different definitions to it. So Fullerism today is very rampant among all Baptist churches. While most Baptist churches would say "Yes, we believe in salvation by grace," yet they would also add that they believe that Christ's death was sufficient for the sins of all people. That is Fullerism and it's very hard for some people to make a distinction between what is biblical and what is Fullerism.

The same can be said about Reformed theology because Reformed theology uses some of the same terminology that we as Baptists use and yet it has an entirely different meaning to it. For instance, the word "baptism." We have a very definite understanding of what the Bible says about baptism. We understand the word to be according to its usage in the New Testament and according to all Greek scholars to be by immersion. But the Reformers have taken that word and they say it can be used any way, it can even be sprinkling.

John Calvin, in his commentary on the Bible, says in his commentary on John 3, you might turn there in your Bibles. He's writing in his commentaries about this particular event. John 3:22-23 *"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized."*

Now, the word "baptized" as I have said to you here before, is really an ecclesiastical word. By that I mean, it is a word formed by the translators in 1611. They formed this word, they actually took the Greek word, *baptismo*, and made it into an English word to conform to the doctrine of the Church of England. So rather than translating the word according to it's biblical used, to immerse, we have the word "baptized." Yet the Greek word "baptismo" means "to immerse." Even John Calvin in his commentary on John 3:22-23 says that they were immersed, *"And John also was immersing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were immersed."*

That's what the Greek text would say. but John Calvin says in his commentary, "It's very obvious that John and Christ baptized or immersed their disciples or their followers. However, he says, "today we don't need to be so concerned with the mode." Now, that to me is the height of blaspheming, to say that we can take the Bible and distort it or twist it to fit our understanding and our traditions.

So, that's what I hope to do in our studies here in order to set forth that we could understand the truth of God what it teaches about various subjects. I'm going to deal with seven different areas where I believe that the Reformers were wrong. I will deal with them individually.

First of all, Their doctrine of Sola Scriptura, 2. Their doctrine of the covenants. 3. Their doctrine of the church. 4. Their doctrine of ordinances. 5. Their doctrine of salvation. 6. Their doctrine of church government. 7. Their doctrine of separation of church and state. I plan to cover all seven of these.

I want to direct your attention again to the Book of Ephesians 4 and I'll set forth for you, my responsibility as a pastor. While we're going there, let's stop at Acts 20. Paul is

speaking here and meeting with the elders from the church at Ephesus and he gives them an admonition in Acts 20:28, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

The word *“to feed”* means *“to guide, to shepherd, to nurture”* the church of God. We are talking about a local assembly. That's the responsibility of pastors.

In verse 29 Paul says, *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”* And that's exactly what happened in the New Testament churches. There were false teachers that arose among them then and that has been continually going on ever since the days of Jesus Christ.

In the 4th chapter of Ephesians then, Paul writing to the church at Ephesus sets forth the responsibility of the pastors, what they are to do and he says in verse 12, *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”*

That is our desire and the reason why we are speaking on this subject: it's not because of any anger or hostility on our part but rather that we might build you up as the saints of God that we would be unified in our understanding of the truth of God and that we would be fortified against false teachings.

So the very first subject I want to take up as being the errors of the Reformers is their teaching of their doctrine concerning the Scriptures. Also, I will point out to you that I have in my library several books written by the Reformers: I have both Berkhof's and Hodge's SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY; I have B.B.Warfield's STUDIES IN THEOLOGY and a full set of Barnes' COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE. These are well-known men among the Reformer's doctrine, plus I have others, so I'm not ignorant about the doctrines and teachings of the Reformed writers. I have also a book here on my pulpit that I have shown to you here already, a book written by Greg Nichols and it is COVENANT THEOLOGY.

So I think I am somewhat knowledgeable, although I don't claim to be expert about anything, about what Reformed covenant theology is. There is a difference between Reformed covenant theology and Baptist covenant theology and I'll deal with that later.

First of all, their doctrine of Sola Scriptura. Now, every child of God, born-again person, loves the Word of God. There is within your heart a God-given love for the Bible. It's a precious book. It is the most precious book we can read, the most precious book that we

can study and it is precious to us because of our love for Christ. Christ has talked to us in His Word. We read the Word of God to learn more about Him who died for us and redeemed us. So if you love the Lord, you love the Word of God and you cherish it and you highly esteem it. The Book of Revelation begins with the statement:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants,” (Revelation 1:1), that's what the whole Bible beginning with Genesis 1:1, is about. The whole Bible is a revelation of God to us and particularly and especially as it comes to us through and by Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter, John 1:14 says, *“The Word became flesh,”* and the word *“word”* is referring to Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. *“The Word became flesh and we beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

In that same chapter of the Gospel of John, verse 18, John writes, *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* He has revealed Him, He has manifested Him. So we read the Word of God because we love Christ and because we love Christ, we love His word because in it we learn more about Him. We also learn more of what He would have us to know that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John chapter 20, verse 31, I read, *“These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*

So the Scriptures are a means whereby they affirm to us what God has said to us and it gives to us a clearer understanding of the mind of God and how God would have us to live. It is, indeed, a great comfort to us. It is a great strength to us to be able to have the Word of God and to read it. The word of God is a comfort to our broken hearts; it is a strength to us in our weaknesses; it's a guide to us in our daily lives.

Psalm 23, is a great Psalm and is known by many people. David says in verse 1, *“The Lord is my Shepherd.”* That word *“Lord”* there is the word that means *“the eternal Son of God, the eternal God.”* Literally, *“He is my Shepherd and no want shall I know.”* What a great comfort that is and where do we get that comfort? Right from the Word of God. It tells us and assures us that God will keep and take care of His people. This great Psalm, the 23rd Psalm goes on with many comforting encouraging words in it. David says, *“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”* Do you know what that is? That's a reference to the Word of God. The Word of God comforts and strengthens us and so we love the Word of God.

David speaking again in that great chapter. Psalm 119, that says so much about the Word of God, he says in verse 97, *“O how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day.”* In verse 103, he says, *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.”* Well, that's what the Word of God is to a child of God, it is sweet, precious and so we highly esteem it.

In that same Psalm, he says in verse 127, “*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold.*” Now, if someone was going to come and steal from you, I think most of us are so carnal that we would almost give up anything in our house in order to protect our lives or in order to protect certain other treasures that we might have. David says, “I esteem the Word of God more precious than gold, yea above fine gold.” Many, many saints of God have died because they would not deny the Word of God. Many saints of God have died because they loved the Word of God more than life. The fact of the matter is, today in certain parts of the world, if you have a Bible in your possession, it will cost you your life.

I was greatly impressed one time when I was on a trip to India, riding on the train beside a man. I began to witness to him, to talk to him about the Lord and he informed me quickly that he was a believer, he knew Jesus Christ. He said, “I love my Bible,” and he opened up his briefcase and pulled out his Bible and the very first thing he did was kiss the book and he read to me a couple of verses of Scripture out of it. Then, when he got ready to put it back up, he kissed the book again and I just thought what a great act of devotion towards this book. Well, the Bible is precious to God's people. David again says in Psalm 119:127, “*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea above all fine gold.*” That's every child of God: they love the Word of God, it's precious. It is the most precious book of all that we could read, the most valuable book that we might read and I do admonish you that we all must and need to be reading more about God's Word.

This, I say, is the first and fatal error of the Reformers, that they spoke much about Sola Scriptura, which is a Latin phrase which means “the supremacy of the Scriptures.” They used that as a standard. It was one of the things, indeed, that caused Martin Luther to rebel against the Roman Catholic Church and want to make some changes in it. As he studied the Word of God, he saw some errors in their practices and so he nailed his Ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, and challenged the Catholic Church against some of their doctrines and practices. This based on his undemanding of the Word of God. So that became the very theme of the Reformation movement, however, sad to say, it was not always followed. Sola Scriptura, and it is at this very point that I began to challenge the Reformers and say this is a very serious error on their part and it is here that they began to go astray.

As proof that they have not fully followed after Sola Scriptura, I give to you their writings in black and white from the Westminster Confession of Faith. To those of you who are not familiar with the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is the product of years, even centuries, of credal theology among the Reformers. It was adopted in England in the 18th century and it expresses and has become the most well-known of all of Protestant creeds.

It is the Confession of Faith that is most highly esteemed. The fact of the matter is, this is one of the errors with the Reformers and it is what we would call credalism. They take their confessions and their creeds and make them to be of equal authority with the Scriptures. Oh, they would deny that but if you began to talk to them about their theology, time and time again what they would refer to is to their Confessions of Faith

and not to the Scriptures. The fact of the matter is, that became a very heated issue with the Reformers, the Protestants, and the Baptists as they dealt with these issues at the beginning of the Reformation.

Now, according to church history, the early Baptists in the beginning of the Reformation movement, were delighted about this breaking away from Catholicism and they were delighted to see churches denounce Catholicism because they thought that this beginning wherein those who had been persecuted by the Catholic Church, the Anabaptists, could now enjoy religious freedom. So, initially at first, there was a great breaking out and much communication was going on between the Anabaptists and the Reformers. But then it was seen by the Anabaptists that the Reformers were not totally and completely leaving Catholicism. They were bringing much of Catholicism with them. They were going to continue to practice some of false teaching of Catholicism. As a results, the Anabaptists and the Reformers engaged themselves in many very serious and heated debates. Then finally, the Reformers became the persecutors of the Anabaptists themselves. In those debates, the Anabaptists would challenge these Reformers time and time again for chapter and verse, chapter and verse, chapter and verse, where do you find this in the Scriptures? It became a very bitter issue because many times they could not supported their doctrines by *“thus saith the word of God.”* So the Reformers would become angry with the Anabaptists because they would say, “All we get from you is 'chapter and verse.’” Well, that's what we have to go by, the Word of God.

But the Westminster Confession of Faith, what the Reformers, what Protestantism, holds to be their greatest expression and the best expression of what they hold to, states it for us. The fact of the matter is, B. B. Warfield in his book “THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE, says on page 111:

“It is our special blessing that as Reformed Christians and heirs of the riches and fullest formation of Reformed thought, we possess that precious heritage the Westminster Confession. The most complete, the most admirable, the most perfect statement of the essential Christian doctrines of holy Scripture which has been formed by man. Here the vital faith of the church is brought to full expression, the Scriptures are declared to be the word of God in such a sense that God is their author.”

However, in spite of this great admiration for the Confession of Faith, you'll find that it has also false teachings in it and I will deal with it from this Chapter one of the Confession, whereby they set forth what they believe about the Word of God. I'm not going to take time to read all of it. While they do express here many truths that are common to us as Baptists, things that we believe about the Bible as being the sole authority. Here, in Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, their error is stated. The Confession says in Chapter 4, Division 4 under this chapter: “The authority of the Holy Scripture, which it ought to be believed and obeyed depends not on the testimony of any man or church but wholly upon God who is truth itself, the author thereof and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.”

Then in division 6, here is what they say and this is the fatal error; “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life is either,” I emphasize the word, “is either expressly set down in the Scriptures or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from the Scriptures.”

In other words, what they're saying is, the Word of God and what we may deduce are what our teaching is. In other words, what we understand the Bible to teach is as equally authoritative as is the Word of God. That's Catholicism! Catholicism holds the very same doctrines. They say, “Yes, we believe the Bible to be the Word of God but we also believe that the teachings of the Church are equally authoritative,” and so when the Pope speaks what is called "ex cathdra," which means that he's speaking authoritative, when they have decided on doctrine, as the Council of Trent and other great Catholic councildoms, as they have formulated their doctrines, they are as authoritative and as binding on Catholics as is the Word of God. That's heresy! That's a departure from what we believe about the Bible. The Bible is to be the sole authority for doctrine and practices.

Well, that's exactly what we as Baptists have held to. The Baptists in England in a response to persecution at that time had to formulate what they believed. They were being persecuted as being heretics and so there was first of all, the 1646 Confession of Faith which was adopted by seven Particular Baptist churches in London. The Baptists were very hesitant to adopt any kind of creed or confession of faith because of their high esteem for the Scriptures. They didn't want them to become binding upon churches. Not any doctrinal statement or creed and when you read their history or when you read their introductions and comments about their doctrinal statements, you'll see that they were very guarded and very careful about what they said. They did not want them to become the law in the churches, so to speak. But their statements of faith were a general consensus of what they understand the Bible to be saying. So in a response, because they were accused of being heretics, they adopted the 1689 Confession of Faith. They closely followed, as much as possible, the Westminster Confession of Faith of the Presbyterians, who at that time under Oliver Cromwell, was ruling in England. The Parliament of England being primarily composed of Presbyterian people. So Presbyterianism was the predominant religion in England, not Catholicism but Presbyterianism. So that was the criteria by which all Christians were judged as the soundness of their doctrine, by what Presbyterians believe.

So, the Baptists in response, adopted their confession of faith and they followed as closely as they could to the Westminster Confession of Faith and many similar statements were used except when it came to that part that deals with the Word of God. The Baptist Confession of Faith uses terminology that sets forth what we as Baptists believe about the Bible. It says in the very first paragraph: “The holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.”

I could go on and read more to you, I have a copy here of the 1689 Baptist London Confession of Faith, and in the last paragraph it says this: “The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined and by which must be examined all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers and doctrines of men and private spirits

can be no other than the holy Scriptures delivered by the Spirit. In the sentence of the Scriptures we are to rest for it is in the Scriptures delivered by the Spirit that our faith is finally resolved.”

That is what is said about this precious book: it is the sole and final authority by which everything is to be examined and by which all opinions are to be established and nothing takes the place of the Word of God. That's quite contrary to what you have in the Westminster Confession of Faith when they say "it is either expressly set down in the Scriptures or by good and necessary consequences" and when you begin to talk to them about various doctrines, especially the doctrine of baptism, they say, “Well, this can be deducted from there,” or, “This conclusion can be drawn.”

Inferences is a great word that the Reformers like to use and so they say, “This is the inferences that we can gather here.” For instance, when you read about the baptism of Lydia and her household, they say, “Well, certainly here's a woman and certainly there must have been some infants there so Paul baptized that household and so it must have been that there were some infants there.” That's the inference they would use. That's what is deducted from the circumstances. The household of the jailer: yes, the whole household was baptized, we read of it in Acts 16. We read in verse 34 that all the household believed, so we would understand that they all were believers and yet they would say, “Well, most certainly there must have been some infants in that household.” So every time they read about a household, they say there must have been some infants there. Well, I tell people that I have a household right now that is composed of my wife and my daughter but there's not an infant in our household. She is a middle-aged woman, so just because we use the word “household” does not mean that we've got infants but that's not what they say. They use these, what they call, "reasonable deductions" as an authority to teach their doctrine of infant baptism and that's the reason how they justify so many of their other errors. That's why it's so critical. We must understand what the Bible says about these things.

This book is to be the standard by which we, as God's people, are to govern our lives and our doctrines. This is the very watershed of difference between Baptists and Reformed Protestants. Baptists are Biblists. We believe in what is called the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Those terms are not new to you here but just in case there may be some who would hear and not know what they mean, it means that every word of the original manuscripts as they were given by the Holy Spirit to the writers, are the very words that God wanted to be used. God so superintended the very choice of words in the holy volume that it may be truly said to be entirely God's word without a mixture of human error.

Many times the writers would say, “God said,” or, “The Lord said to me.” Other Scriptures can be given as proof of what we believe, but there are two great statements about the Bible in itself. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, “*All Scripture*,” all Scripture, that's very important. All Scripture, that includes all the Old Testament writings and the writings of the apostles also. You say, “Well, why would you call the writings of the apostles Scriptures?” Well, that's exactly what Peter referred to the writings of Paul. He

refers to them as being Scripture and so Paul says, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration.*" That word there means "God breathed"; it comes from the very mouth of God.

In the 10th chapter of Matthew, the Lord is comforting and telling his apostles about things that are going to happen to them and He says to them in the 10th chapter of Matthew, verse 17, I'll begin reading, "*But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak.*" Some have said, "Well, we ought not to prepare ahead of time. We just get up and start talking." Their sermons manifest that they have not studied ahead of time. Christ is not saying, don't study. Paul says, "*Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God.*" What our Lord is saying, "You're caught in a situation. You're brought into a council. They're going to bring charges against you. You have no way of preparing what to say. You don't even know what the charges are. They are false charges, be assured of this, when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall say. "*For it is not ye that speak but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*" What a comfort to know that God says that He will assist, guide, enable these people who are under this false charge so that they, without any preparation at all, can be assured that God will move upon them to speak the very words that God would have them to say.

You'll find that's what happened in the Book of Acts many times. They were brought before councils and they were charged with things. They spoke and answered and we have it recorded for us in the Word of God, the Book of Acts. The Holy Spirit of God gave them the very words to say, words, which we today highly esteem as being the very words of God. In Stephen's defense in the 7th chapter of Acts, here is a great history about the people of Israel and you read that and you say, "Man, this guy was a great student about the history of Israel." Well, he may or may not have been, but he said some things in which would tell you that he had infallible knowledge given to him by the Holy Spirit of God and so it is with all the Bible. The very words, not just the thoughts, but the very words that God would have us to have, He gave unto us in the Bible.

So Paul says, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*" that's the 16th verse. Many people are not familiar, though, with the 17th verse. The 17th verse of 2 Timothy 3 says this, "*That the man of God may be perfect,*" or mature, "*thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" Here is all that we have to have: the Word of God and we take that as being the instrument whereby that we can preach and teach the truth of God as it is given to us from God Himself.

The Apostle Peter speaks to us in his second epistle. Peter was a man who had heard the Lord speak many times but he denies the human origin of the Scriptures and says in chapter one, verse 21, "*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man but holy men of God spake as they were moved,*" and that word "moved" in the Greek means that

they were “guided and carried along; that they were guided by the Holy Spirit of God.” Many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible confirm to us that these men were writing not by human reasoning or philosophy but they were writing by divine revelation, the Holy Spirit giving them the very words that they were to use.

The Apostle Paul states that his teachings were those given to him by God. In 1 Corinthians 2, he says in verse 13, that what he writes was "*not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;*"

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was giving the Christians directions for their exercise of spiritual gifts. He said in chapter 12:28 that God “has set the apostles in the church first.” Now in verse 37 of this 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, he says the mark of a spiritual man is to receive Paul's writings as “*the commandments of God.*” Now, think about this: this is, it is either blaspheming or it is truth. He says, “What I’m writing to you is as the very commandments of God.” I've heard people say many bad things about the Apostle Paul, especially the feminists. They don't like the writings of the Apostle Paul. They say he was a woman-hater. He was never a married man and he hated women. Well, there is no historical evidence to support that but rather right the opposite. Paul evidently was a member of the Sanhedrin at one time and if you were a member of the Sanhedrin, you had to be a married man. Probably his wife had passed away in earlier years before he was converted. We don't know that for sure, that's speculation, that's not law and gospel, but whether you like or don't like what he says, understand what Paul says about his writings, they were the commandments of God, not the commandments of men.

Something that I have been greatly impressed with lately is how many times the Lord says that the words He spake were the very words His Father gave him. John 14:10, he says, “*The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself.*” In 16:13 of John, “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth and he shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.*” In the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John, verse 8, “*For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*”

Our Lord is speaking here about his ministry to the disciples and His followers and He says “*the very words that I gave them were the very words that thou gavest me.*” Would anyone dare to try to thwart God? Only the devil would do that and only his demons are interested in trying to do that. That's impossible. But what about those who would change the Bible to conform to their understanding? I believe it's a serious offense.

You'll notice that Christ says that these words were the very words that the Father gave to Him, thus the Scriptures are our sole authority and are all-sufficient authority for doctrine and practice. Our Lord in Matthew 5:17-18 says this, “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*” You will note what our Lord says: the words “jot” and “tittle.” There is some question as to exactly what they mean in the Hebrew but it's pretty much

concluded, it means something like the dotting of an i and the crossing of a t in the English. The Lord is saying every minute detail that's ever been written in the Old Testament, not one of them will fail to come to pass, it's still full and binding until it is fulfilled. The law of God is forever. In Matthew 24:35 he says, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*" That means that whatever the Lord says, it is preserved and perpetuated by God Himself. Now that's a very important understanding and I want to make a great emphasis on that because the Lord makes a promise that he would preserve and perpetuate His words.

Now, we have today and we're familiar with the various translations. I have said and make no apology for it, that I believe the King James translation that we have today is the best English translation of the Bible we have. There have been many different translations prior to that: the Geneva Bible, one of them being Tyndale's Bible. Do you know it was with great persecution that the Word of God was made available to God's people? The Catholic Church tried to have it stamped out. They tried to prevent it from being published. When you read about Tyndale and his struggle to have the Bible printed, you'll find that they hounded him. As a fact of the matter, after the man died, they dug up his ashes and threw them in the Thames River because they hated the man who had brought forth the Bible and made it available to people all throughout England. Even all throughout the known world at that time, because the Bible is to be our sole authority. It is a great thing because God has promised to bless and to comfort His people with His Word.

The doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture is witnessed by the whole body of Christian literature. The early post-apostolic writers wrote about the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. I'm quoting again from Warfield and he says that Origen, one of the great writers of the early post-apostolic age, he asserts: "the Holy Spirit was so co-worker with the evangelists in the composition of the gospels that therefore lapse of memory, error or falsehood, was impossible to them." Irenaeus, the pupil of Polycarp claims, "For Christians, a clear knowledge that 'the Scriptures are perfect, seeing that they are spoken by God's Word and His Spirit.'"

The argument is made today, "Well, we don't have the original autographed copies. We don't have the original manuscripts and so it is a matter of an open subject of exactly what God is saying." That's the great argument that's made against verbal, plenary inspiration. Now, think about this for a minute: every born-again child of God has an understanding given to him by the Word of God that we are kept by the power of God. Regardless of how much hell and Satan may war against your soul, God has promised you everlasting life. God has promised you that even though you will die physically, yet the Lord said "*those that believe in me, they will never die but they are given eternal life.*" Our Lord said that "*no man can pluck them out of my hand; I give to them eternal life.*" That is a great comfort to every child of God, to know that God has promised to keep and preserve your salvation and that you will be ultimately glorified because God promised to keep you.

No less than the power of God to keep you safe or to keep your eternal salvation is the

promise that God made to His church. Matthew 16, He says the gates of hell shall not prevail against His churches. That's God's promise. He said, "*Lo, I'm with you always even to the end of the ages.*" That's God's promise to His churches and in spite of what some false historians say, in spite of all that the Devil has done, the Lord's churches have been preserved down through the years. They're still in existence today and I'll tell you, they will be here until the Lord comes again. That's the same thing that's true about the God's word. Oh, there are some errors in translation sometimes, there are some things that need to be clarified but the critical issues and doctrines in the Word of God, has been preserved through the ages til we have this book today, this Bible that we call the King James version. It is a safe and accurate guide in all teachings and readily available to God's people.

I will not say that about any modern translations. Many of the modern translations try to corrupt the Word of God and they try to distort the truth of God, denying the deity of Christ, denying His blood atonement. There are many things that are distorted in those many modern versions. We'll not get into that today but I just simply want to point out to you that the Lord said that, "*My words will stand forever,*" and so God has made promise that we have a Bible that we can trust and that we have a preserved Word of God. The power of God keeps His people. The power of God keeps His churches, and the power of God keeps His Word.

The bottom line then is that the Scriptures are the infallible, immutable, inspired Word of God. As such, they are our sole authority and final authority in doctrines and practice. We as Baptists hold to this. I'm not speaking anything new to you. I'm just setting forth what we as Baptists believe and why we hold the Word of God to be our sole authority as being the opposite of what Protestantism and the Reformers held.

I want to tell you, it's not our doctrinal statements or creeds that our faith is manifested in. Let me explain that to you. It's not in our doctrines and our creeds that our faith is made manifest. Oh, a person might say, "I believe everything that is written in the 1689 London Confession of Faith. I am a believer in all those truths. No Sir! It's not what we profess that we believe it's how we live. There is a modern day saying, "It's not just that we must talk the talk, we must walk the walk." So, it's not just what we believe but it's how we live that proves that we hold this book in the highest esteem.

That's is especially true for preachers. Our Lord said to the Apostle Peter, "*Lovest thou me?*" "*Yeah, Lord, thou knowest I love thee,*" Peter said. Christ said, "*Feed my lambs.*" Three times the Lord told him to feed His sheep. "*Lovest thou me?*" "*Yeah, Lord, thou knowest I love you.*" "*Feed my lambs.*"

You see, God calls pastors to be shepherds in His flocks. To be shepherds because they love the Lord and in so loving the Lord, they want to serve Him in feeding His people and helping His people to mature as Christians. It's not always easy, it's not always popular. The fact of the matter is: many, many preachers have lost their lives because they would hold to the truth of God. It is not very popular to hold the truth of God among many professing Christians today. I'm thankful for this church and the congregation that

God has blessed us with and for your love of the truth of God and so it makes it a joy to be your pastor.

But there are many other preachers who say they love the Bible. "Yes," they will say they love Jesus, but they love the popularity of the world more. They love the success of the world more and so they compromise on the teaching of God's word. Well, the reason why we are to preach the truth of God is because we love the Lord.

People say, "You ought not to be so divisive in your doctrines. Baptism is not an issue that we ought to differ about. We ought to be able to get along about these things." Well, I believe in Christian love, I believe in Christian charity, I believe in Christian fellowship and I want to have fellowship with all of God's people as much as possible but I will not compromise nor violate the Bible or my convictions in order that I might have friendship with anyone. Our Lord said, "*Think not that I came to send peace but a sword and a man's family will be his enemies and I will set a man against his wife, a wife against a husband and parents against children and children against parents.*"

What does that mean? It's the truth of God and the question is: who do we love the most? Christ or family? Christ or friends? Christ or the world? It is manifested by our obedience and submission to the Word of God and what God says. The fact of the matter is: the proof that we love Christian people is that we keep the Word of God, we adhere faithfully to the Word of God. In 1 John 5, in verse two, "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*"

The Lord said in the Gospel of John, chapter 14, "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*" The proof that we love the Lord is that we hold to His Word and follow the truth of God that is set forth in His Word. The truth that we love God's people is the same: we hold to the Word of God and we follow after His teachings. This is how we manifest that we love the Lord.

In the 15th chapter of Matthew again, the Lord said, "*These people draw nigh unto me with their mouth and honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me.*"

People can be very fundamental or very orthodox in their theology, you see, but in their hearts, they are cold toward God. Fellowship with the Lord is primary, it is essential to every child of God and in order to have the Lord's fellowship, we must walk with Him according to the Word of God.

In First John, chapter 1, John says, "*I write these things unto you that your joy may be full.*" The reason why it is so critical and so important to follow after the Word of God and adhere to it, is because we want the Lord's fellowship and the Lord's blessings in our lives. We cannot have His blessings and fellowship with Christ if we walk contrary to His Word. So, the proof that we really honor the Word of God, that we really love Jesus Christ, that we believe the Bible is indeed the very Word of God, is our submission and the conforming our lives to it. This is why God has given us His Word, so that we would learn more about Christ. Not just to have a head knowledge about it but that we would

have an intimate personal relationship with Him and love Him more and be conformed to Him.

In the 5th chapter of Ephesians, Paul says that *“He gave himself for his church and loved his church that he might wash it and that he might present it as a church without any spot or blemish and that he would wash it by the Word of God.”* That's how we as Christians have our lives cleaned and conformed to God, by the Holy Spirit using the Word of God.

Again, 2 Timothy 3:16, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for instruction, for reproof and for correction.”* We don't always like that part of it, for reproof and correction, but that's why God gave it and preserved it for us, that we would be conformed unto Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 2, there is a verse of Scripture that is very important to us here. In Second Corinthians 3:18, Paul was writing about the Spirit's revealing to us the truth of God. *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed,”* and the intensive verb is *“we are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

You see, what God is doing in a Christian's life as he reads the Word of God and as he submits himself to it, our lives are being conformed unto Christ and molded like Him. That's the reason why we need to be students of the Bible. That's the reason why we need to love the Word of God. As David said, *“Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.”* It's a very precious book if we adhere to it and conform our lives to it. So we must not only just talk the talk, we must also walk the walk.

Now, there are some areas I am concerned about where we, Primitive Baptists, are compromising on the Word of God. There are many areas that I could mention but I just want to briefly mention these six things that I think that we as Christians, Primitive Baptists particularly, are compromising and we're losing our emphasis on these things. As I talk to other Christians and other preachers, the number one thing that we're concerned about is our godly living. We are not relying on the Word of God to have the impact in our lives that we ought to and we're not conforming our lives and measuring our lives by *“thus saith the Word of God.”* But we're becoming more and more involved with the world that we live in. It's a hard thing to keep yourself separated from worldliness and the only way that we can do it, is that we would walk in close fellowship with the Lord. We must love and study His Word. We need to be in communion with Him by the Holy Spirit of God so that we would be measuring our lives, not by fellow Christians, or by the world, but by the Word of God so that our lives are being transformed. If not, fellow Christians, our lives become tainted and blackened with sin and we lose our fellowship with the Lord and we lose our testimony in the world that we live in. Why? Because we don't take heed to *“thus saith the Lord.”* In Titus 2:10,11, Paul says, *“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”* That's a concern that I have for all of God people.

Next, there is a lack of conviction about biblical evangelism. I'm thankful that we here as a church have been blessed of God to go to foreign countries but I'm also concerned about the little that we're doing in our individual lives and in our local areas. You see, evangelism is not just something that a preacher does in a foreign country, Biblical evangelism is something that every individual Christian is responsible for. We are to be witnesses for Christ. It's not just something that we do by sending money or books to some foreign country. But it's what we do right next door, to the people that we work with, to our friends, our family members, others that know not Christ. It is the sharing of the Word of God with them and the testimony of what God has done for us by Christ. That is Biblical evangelism.

I'm concerned that we as Baptist churches have lost our concern for the biblical role of men and women in the home and the church. That's the impact of the world has had on us. We are conforming in many ways to the world. So, the biblical role of men and women, husbands and wives in the home and in the church is deteriorating and we're caving in to the pressures of the world around us. We don't dare to speak about those things whereby that men are to be distinct from women and women are to be distinct from men and there are particular roles in their home and their roles in church because of the worldly pressure that comes to us. So, we are compromising and we are departing from the Word of God.

Which also brings to this subject, we are compromising on the doctrine of women's head covering in assembly. I'm thankful for you ladies here that you also practice this but as I talk to other pastors in other churches, many of them say, "Yes, I know that's right." But they're not preaching it and teaching it. Why? Well, some of them say, "It was just a custom back then. Paul was writing to the church at Corinth." Well, we can take the penknife and cut out all that Paul says in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, you'd have to take it out of the Bible because that's written to the church at Corinth. Is it not written for all churches and everything that he says in those epistles are for all Christians and all ages? To imagine that Bible believing people would say, "Well, here's a part of the Bible that doesn't apply to us today." *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."* Then there are those who say, "Well, I know it's true but if I teach it in our church, our women are going to get very mad and get upset about it, so I just don't say anything." I could tell you and I've got proof of what I'm about to say here: I could name to you some Primitive Baptist churches where the preachers taught this very doctrine and the church practiced it, but now time has changed and because of compromising, it's no longer practiced in those churches. You will not find a woman in those churches wearing a head covering. Why? Did the Bible change? No, it was because of compromising of the Word of God.

There is also the compromising of the separation from religious holidays. Baptists have through out history held that those so-called holidays are nothing more than pagan holidays and yet because of the impact of the world, we are more and more conforming to Christmas and Easter and our churches and our people don't understand because our pastors are not preaching the distinction of what's wrong with Catholicism and those holidays.

I'll bring the last one and that's the abuse and neglect of the Lord's Day. I'm not a legalists, I'm not a Sabbatarian, I do not believe that we are under the Old Testament law about the seventh day but I do believe that God has given to us a day of rest. A day that we ought to be involved primarily in the worship or the service of the Lord. I know that there are issues in times and things that come up. Someone said, you know, "I've got an ox in the ditch and I need to get it out." That's true but I don't believe that we ought to plan our days and our work weeks in such away that we abuse the Lord's Day. We should use the Lord's Day for the purpose of giving ourselves to study and meditation of God's word. The great weakness of Christians today is the failure to study and meditate on the Word of God. Oh, I know we're all busy. Everybody is busy. We are all too busy. We're all under great pressure: our time, our schedules. But you'll read of Christians in days past, the most devout Christians, the ones who walked lives that are an example to God's people, they were people who gave themselves to meditating and studying God's Word.

It is to our disgrace as Christians in general and particularly us as Primitive Baptists, who hold the Bible to be such a precious book, that we don't spend more time in the study, meditating on the Word of God. People will say, "Oh, that's the preacher's responsibility." How are you going to know whether the preacher is preaching truth to you if you don't read and study the word of God yourself? And there is a personal responsibility you have to meditate in God's Word and study the Word of God, to know what it says.

But worldly pleasures and worldly pressures have consumed our times and there is a great abuse and neglect of the Lord's Day. Many, many churches today are neglecting their services or abandoning their services on the Lord's Day simply because their people won't come out. May God help us. If we believe the Bible to be God's Word, then I admonish you, challenge you, that we would hold it dear to our hearts and that we would hold it dear and manifest that we love God's Word by it becoming the thing that governs our lives in every area. To meditate on God's Word day and night, God told Joshua and "*then thou shalt make thy way prosperous.*" Today, prosperity is measured by worldly prosperity but true prosperity is measured by God in conforming to His Word and may God bless us to do that.

Let's pray.

Our Father, I thank you for this church congregation that you've blessed us with and we pray that you would help us individually and collectively that we would be governed by "*thus saith the word of God,*" that our lives be molded by it and that we would hold the word of God in high esteem and cherish it and that we as a church would stay faithful to your word in all that we do and that we as individuals, including myself as pastor, would be faithful to the Word of God and that our lives would be governed by it in every area. In Jesus' name I pray and ask it. Amen.