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That is a very comforting hymn for us to sing, "God will take care of you," and it leads quite naturally into the series that we're doing. If you consider it from this perspective, how do you know that? How do you know that God will take care of you? And immediately we see that we must have an authority by which those assuring promises are conveyed to our heart. We must know that based on what God has said about himself and to know where he has spoken.

We have looked at how do we know that God exists so that we know that there is a God who exists and we need to know something about him, and we have seen how God has spoken in the 66 books of the Bible, and that assurance that we need as we go through the trials of life must be grounded on truth. It must be grounded on things that we are persuaded of and that we can entrust our lives to. The Apostle Paul said, "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day," the day of judgment when he stands before God. Well, beloved, if you just think for a little bit, you realize that if we are going to actually have a real assurance, a real confidence of well-being as we go through life in this cursed world and as we walk through difficulties, we must know whether that assurance is real or whether we are just trying to live a fallacy based on sentiment that really has no grounding in the way that things really are. And so it is very essential for us to understand why we look to Scripture and why we look to Scripture alone for the revelation of God and the comfort and assurance that we need as we walk through life, to say nothing about the more essential eternal issues of the eternal well-being of our soul. And so I am grateful for David and Catherine leading us in music here this evening as it leads so naturally into the important things that we need to discuss.

We are coming to the conclusion of our series how to know the Bible is true. Tonight's message on Sola Scriptura, Sunday's message will be the final message in that series and then Nathaniel and I are planning for next Tuesday to do a Q&A, an interview to work out some of the pastoral and the practical aspects of where we are this far in our overall series on building a Christian mind. Tonight, we want to look at Sola Scriptura and Sola Scriptura is a cornerstone doctrine of the Reformation. As you know, as we've taught in the past, the Reformation, which kind of the early light of it started in the 13th, 14th century with men like John Wycliffe, came to full flower in the 16th century under the teaching of Martin Luther and John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli and others of those great

men, John Knox in Scotland, and the Reformation rescued biblical Christianity, it delivered biblical Christianity from the Dark Ages that had been introduced by the Catholic Church, and the Reformation theology is often summarized in five Latin terms: Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone; Sola Gratia grace alone; Sola Fide, faith alone; Solus Christus, Christ alone; Soli Deo Gloria, to the glory of God alone. And those are, you know, those are great doctrines of Scripture, we stand on hallowed ground when we consider these things, and we've taught on those in the past. If you want to look them up online, you can do so and find the fuller teaching, but those doctrines are the beliefs that shaped Reformation theology, that Scripture alone is the authority by which we know the revelation of God, not the traditions of men or the councils and declarations of men on earth. Sola Gratia, that we are saved by grace alone, by faith alone, that God's grace alone is what empowers us to believe, and that Christ has received by faith alone, not by works that we do. We are justified by receiving Christ by faith. Not by faith plus works. Works do not erase our guilt. Works do not deliver us from the power of sin. It comes through Christ alonem by faith alone, by grace alone, and this is all to the glory of God alone. Salvation, biblical salvation, redounds only to the glory of God; man cannot take credit for any aspect of it.

Now, I suppose I should say the various forms of Sola in those five points are the Latin term for "alone." They highlight the exclusivity of each article of faith against Catholic additions that contradicted the gospel. And beloved, you need to understand if you get nothing else out of the message tonight, is that the word "alone" is essential to understand. People are happy for us, in one sense, to believe the Bible, that's fine for you to believe the Bible, where they take offense is when we say it's the Bible alone, that there are no other books, that there is no other place where God has revealed himself either in the past or today. The exclusivity of the message is what offends. And you think about Christ, you know, you can believe in Christ and nobody will trouble you too much. It's when you insist that they also must believe in Christ or they will be condemned to hell that Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me," it's when you say Christ alone that the battle is engaged and that the conflict comes to the fore. And it's when you say faith alone, not faith plus works, not faith plus sacraments, not faith plus charity or anythings like that are the means by which we receive Christ. The word "alone" is what engages the battle and that is certainly true on the authority of Scripture.

Now our church, as many of you know, and if you are a member you had to read through our Confession of Faith, the 1689 Baptist Confession, the Second London Confession of 1689, and in that Confession we find the doctrines, the beliefs that all members of Truth Community Church must continually maintain, and you find the beliefs, stated differently, that people must publicly confess and assent to if they are to become members of Truth Community Church, and so it's a very important document and it sets forth what we understand the Bible to teach. In that Confession, as we deal with the matter of Scripture alone, we read this, chapter 1, verse 6, and this should be familiar to all of us, this doctrine, this truth, and it's a kind of a lengthy quote, so bear with me. But when it comes to the Bible, we believe and we teach as Scripture does this, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto

which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men." Everything that God has to say is set forth in Scripture and it is sufficient for his glory, for man's salvation to lead us to faith, to teach us, and to equip us to walk through life in all of its difficulties, all of its challenges, all of the adversities that we go through, everything is contained in the Bible and in the Bible alone and nothing is to be added to it.

At another point, the Confession reads this, "The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest," in other words, we find our final answer in this place, that supreme judge "can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved." What it's saying is, is that when we have questions about what the truth is, we go to the Bible and we go to the Bible alone. When we hear the teaching of men, that teaching is to be examined by the standard of Scripture and Scripture alone. If something contradicts Scripture, it is by definition false. And the fact that everything is set down in Scripture means that there will never be a time during the church age in which some new revelation will be added. We don't have to wonder if somehow canonical books were left out of the Scripture. No, Scripture is complete, nothing is missing. We don't have to wonder if somebody comes and says, "I am a prophet from God and I have a word from God for you today." We don't have to wonder at all if that's true or not. It's not. God has spoken and he has said all that he has to say in Scripture and nothing is to be added to it, whether by new revelation of the Spirit or by traditions of men.

And so this greatly simplifies understanding truth and where truth is to be found. We don't have to root around in obscure books and in obscure writings of ancient writers in order to find maybe something that we've missed. It's all right there easily revealed and plainly revealed in the Bible. And so this becomes a benchmark for assurance and a benchmark for discernment, and it simplifies things in a way that is consistent with this, think about it this way: if God exists, and he does, and if God is good, and he is, then isn't it obvious that he would make the way plain by which his will could be known, that he would not confuse us with contradictory revelations after the Bible was completed? Isn't that obvious? Isn't it obvious that he wouldn't undermine his own testimony in the word of God by giving subsequent revelations to crackpots who claim that they have a word from God and that goes beyond what he has obviously already said? God is not the author of confusion. God is the author of peace. He's the author of clarity and Scripture is clear. And so this is a most fundamental doctrine for us to understand and religions that add to the authority of the Bible with documents that they claim are of parallel authority, parallel revelation to the 66 books of the Bible, beloved, they're not the true gospel. It's a different religion because it's based on a different authority. And we receive Christianity based on the authority of God. If someone suggests a different authority, they are by definition suggesting a different religion altogether and a different religion is not the religion of the Bible, it's not the religion of Christ, it's not the gospel of Christ, it's not the truth of Christ.

And so we just need to be really clear and definitive on this and this is ground that we must hold. We cannot yield this ground at all and make room for other things like, you know, of people receiving visions, you know, and I've mentioned this in the past, you know, there's a whole realm of people saying Muslims are being saved by visions of Jesus appearing to them at the foot of their bed. This is not to be believed. This is not to be followed because faith, saving faith, Scripture says, saving faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, by the written word of God. This is where God has spoken, and we must hold to this and not be distracted by appearances that look like angels; Scripture says, you know, that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. And so the Bible is our authority.

What I want to do is establish this exclusivity of Scripture tonight by looking at three different aspects of matters. First of all, we want to consider the authority of Scripture. The authority of Scripture, and with the introduction that we've seen so far, authority, the term authority in this context means this, it means that the Bible alone is the standard by which all truth claims are to be measured. The Bible alone is the standard by which all truth claims are to be measured. You could put it this way, and I love the simplicity of these things, Scripture alone is to determine what we believe and what we do. Scripture alone is to determine what we believe and what we do, and so if it's in Scripture, we believe it. If it's affirmed by Scripture, we believe it. If it's outside of Scripture, our conscience is not bound by it. And the authority of Scripture comes from its very nature. Why is Scripture authoritative? If you want to put a subpoint here under your notes under that first heading, Scripture is authoritative exclusively because, subpoint A, Scripture is inspired. Scripture is inspired by God. We could ask this question: where did the Bible come from? You ever wonder about that? You know, we pull it off our shelf and we have a complete unit, one book of 66 books. Well, where did the Bible come from? What is its ultimate source? Did godly men come up with ideas and write down their perspectives, their human insights into the human condition or is the Bible something more than that?

Turn to a passage we've often turned to, 2 Timothy 3:16. 2 Timothy 3:16, and the translation of the English Standard Version is a happy one. It is a good one. Verse 16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." When we talk about the inspiration of Scripture, we're drawing from this text; the idea of breathed out means that the Bible originated from a divine activity. God in his infinite mind, in his omniscient wisdom, breathed out Scripture. The Bible proceeds from God, not from man, and that's why we rightly call it the word of God. If we can put it this way, it came from within God and he sent it forth from his own mind and so we rightly call it the word of God.

And so inspiration is infinitely more than saying that the human authors were poetically gifted, or that they had some kind of insight, human insight that went beyond their contemporaries. No, what the doctrine of inspiration says is that God – follow me here – God by his omniscient and omnipotent power, God worked through the human authors to say exactly what he wanted to be said and God did this as a means of revealing himself and revealing his will to mankind. It was a voluntary act of self-disclosure. The things

about the knowledge of God, the attributes of God, the essence of God, the person of Christ, these are things that man could not arrive at in his own judgment and his own speculations. If we were to know the things of God, the character of God and the nature of the gospel, God had to make it known to us, he had to reveal it to us because we could not find those things on our own.

And so we understand that the Bible came from an activity of God. How did that happen? How did God work in order to make it happen? Well, turn a little further back in your Bibles past Hebrews to the book of 2 Peter. After James, you'll find the letters of Peter and in 2 Peter 1:20 and 21, we get an idea of how the process worked. We'll start in verse 19 where the Apostle Peter said, "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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." Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit and in a process that we can understand at some level, but the fullness of how the process worked somewhat beyond our mind, we can understand this, is that God, the Holy Spirit moved on these men. He had operative motion in their minds and in their heart in such a way that he carried them along as they wrote the words of Scripture, guiding them, directing them, protecting them from writing anything that was erroneous or misleading so that the truth of God was set forth by them in their writings in its pure and undiluted and undiminished effect.

This word that men were carried along by the Holy Spirit, it's the same verb that describes a ship being carried along by the wind. You can see it in Acts 27:15, we won't turn there, but the idea of the wind filling the sails of a ship and directing it by the power of the wind so that the ship is moving by a power being sent upon it gives us a picture of what was happening when these men were writing the words of Scripture. The power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit himself came upon them as they picked up pen to write, and they were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.

What does that mean and what's the consequence of that? Beloved, we're dealing with matters of most consequential essence here. The final determining influence as the Bible was being written was the person of God, the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit of God who had the final determination on what was being written. He so worked in the minds of these men, he so directed and influenced their thoughts and emotions as they were writing that he determined the final outcome of what they said. Why is that important? Well, beloved, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. God is true. God cannot lie so that when we say that the Holy Spirit determined the outcome of these writings, what we're saying is that by definition everything that they affirm must be true because they come from God himself, not simply from the opinions of men.

Now, it's often objected to the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, which we'll look at in a moment, how could mere mortal men write things that were completely true and without error? The argument goes isn't it obvious that since it came from a human and

humans are subject to error, that the human writing of the Bible was subject to error as well? Well, there's a dual authorship that goes on in Scripture. Yes, yes, Scripture came by the hand of men but they were not writing in their own wisdom or according to their own limitations. They were chosen by God, set apart by God, and acted upon by God so that what they wrote was guided and determined by God so that the outcome was what he wanted, overriding their propensity to mistakes to make sure that nothing inaccurate was written down in the process. And so we know that Scripture is true, coming back to our original statements in this long series, Jesus Christ authenticates Scripture to us. Part of the process is that he sent his Spirit upon his disciples and the Spirit guided them into the truth.

Look back at John 15 with me. John 15. Jesus himself promised this process. In John 15:26, he alludes to the Holy Spirit and he says, "when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning." Now look over at chapter 16, verse 13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, will guide you into all of the truth so that when the writers of Scripture began their work, the Holy Spirit had providentially prepared them, the Holy Spirit was working in their minds, he was guiding it so that what they wrote was ultimately finally the very word of God himself. It was the Spirit giving them what they needed to say and making sure that they said it truly. That's the outworking and the essence of what we mean when we say Scripture is inspired. It is breathed out by God. The Spirit came in his power and carried the writers along so that what they wrote was the very word of God.

Now that's of great importance to us. It means that when we go to Scripture we can trust it. You can trust the Bible. You can know that what you read in Scripture is true. When it speaks to you about the way of salvation being found through faith in Christ alone, it tells you not to trust in your own works, not to trust in your own righteousness but to trust in Christ alone for salvation, you can trust that completely. When God says whoever believes in Christ will not perish but have eternal life, you can rely on that, you can rely on that because it is based on a promise contained in the word of God which comes from God himself and God cannot lie, so that this becomes a cornerstone on which you build all of life and all of your hope. The determinative influence was the Holy Spirit.

Now for your second subpoint here as we read about and we consider the authority of Scripture, Scripture is inspired, it comes from God through the work of the Holy Spirit on the human author; secondly, we can say this about the authority of Scripture, that Scripture is inerrant. Scripture is inerrant. The inerrancy of Scripture simply means that the Bible is without error in everything that it affirms, and if God is true, and he is, and if the Spirit of God directed the men as they wrote the pages of Scripture, and he did, then there's a consequence to that, beloved. If the Holy Spirit supervised the very words of Scripture, we can be confident that it will be free from all error. John 17:17 says, "Your word is truth." There is no mixture of error in the Bible, and this has very practical and

far-reaching ramifications. Scripture never affirms anything that is contrary to fact. Scripture never records something that is untrue, inaccurate or false whether it speaks to spiritual realities, to matters of morals, or matters of history, or matters of science. Scripture is incapable of teaching error. It is incapable of misleading us because it comes from the God of truth, and so Scripture is without error and it is trustworthy in whole and in its parts. Collectively it cannot mislead us. Its individual parts cannot mislead us. The Bible originated with God and he used a process that guaranteed their absolute accuracy.

Now, what does that mean in practical matters? There are some, there are many actually, that say, well yes, we can trust the Bible when it teaches matters of faith, when it teaches matters of morals, but the possibility is therefore to be wrong and mistaken and to have errors in other matters of science or such matters, matters of history, and so that you can trust it when it teaches you the gospel, but you can't be so confident when it comes to matters of history, matters of science. Now, at a superficial level, that may sound tempting. It sounds like you can have your cake and eat it too. You can have the gospel of Jesus Christ and you can also have the atheistic model of evolution to explain the origins of the universe, or to explain other matters of what we observe in the world around us.

That sounds tempting but, beloved, it's deadly poison and you cannot go there and be faithful to Christ and to be true to Scripture because here a couple of reasons for that. First of all, to say that Scripture could be wrong in matters of history, consider the consequences of that, beloved. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a proclamation about what God did in history, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried and he was raised on the third day. Those are matters of historical fact. There is no gospel apart from that historical fact. Well, if you have a Bible that can err in history, you are suddenly throwing an 8.0 earthquake on the very foundations of the gospel. The gospel and the history that gave rise to the gospel cannot be separated. To inject error into history is to inject error into the hope for our soul.

And further, beloved, think about it this way, and this is a matter that comes up in scholarship, so-called biblical scholarship all the time as people adopt a critical view toward the Bible. You know, did Jesus really say what he said in the gospels, or did the gospel writers make some things up, and doubt is injected on this, on things like that. Is six day creation really true or not? And what you need to see is that as soon as you say that there are parts of the Bible that are true and there are parts that are subject to error, what you've done is this and I'll speak as though I'm speaking to a proud, boastful scholar who says we can separate these things out and we'll determine what's true and what's not in the Bible. What that scholar has done is he has placed himself over the Bible. The scholar will tell you now what's true and what's not. He'll tell you what the history is, what's true and what's not, what the science is true and what's not, and rather than having a trustworthy book, you have men and women who have inserted themselves between you and the authority of Scripture, and who presume to tell you, "I will tell you what Scripture is true. I will tell you the parts that you can believe and the parts that you cannot." That's obviously foolish. That's obviously not what God intended. And beloved, beloved, don't let anyone become a higher authority to you than the Bible because once you do that, once a man puts himself in that position where he will stand in judgment of

Scripture, now that man becomes your final authority. That man whose breath is in his nostrils, that man who is a fallen creature, whose mind is distorted by his own personal sin, and by the sin we all inherit from Adam, he is in no position to stand as a final authority and no one should put their trust in a man who puts himself over the Bible to tell us what's true and what is not.

And so while it might sound like it gets you out of some difficulties to say Scripture is inerrant in matters of faith but we don't have to believe it entirely and implicitly in matters of history or science, beloved, that's deadly poison. That will be the destruction of your soul to embrace that, and what God has given us is a book that we can believe and trust entirely in everything that it teaches. In everything that it teaches. It means that we have to study it hard to make sure that we understand what it's actually saying. That doesn't mean that we approach Scripture in a superficial way but it means that when we do the necessary hard work of interpretation and we come to a right understanding of the Scripture, we can know that we have something true and that we can stake our lives and our souls on. God inspired all the words so all the words and what they teach are true. That's what the inerrancy of Scripture teaches us. There's no other book like it. It stands alone as the authority.

Now listen, Jesus even addressed this matter. This is a false way to think about Scripture, you know, to think that there is a secondary level of matters that we don't have to be so committed to in the truth of Scripture, history, science and what have you. When Scripture speaks to so-called earthly things, well, that's not as important, they might say as faith and morals and so we can distinguish between the two. No, no, no, not at all. In fact, Jesus turns that argument on its head. If you look at the gospel of John 3 for a moment, John 3, beginning in verse 11, Jesus said to Nicodemus, he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony." Context, of course, Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again if you are to enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus had earlier said in verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Now look at what Jesus says in verse 12. He says, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" If I tell you about lesser matters pertaining to the earth and you don't believe my testimony on that, how and on what basis would you believe if I tell you heavenly things about spiritual things that you cannot see? Well, beloved, take that line of reasoning and apply it to the Scriptures. If you can't believe what the Bible says about history and science, then on what possible basis can you believe what it says about greater more important things? If it can't be trusted in the details of earth, on what basis do we say we believe it for the heavenly things?

And at what point do you kick-in in believing the Bible? John MacArthur makes this point, you say you reject, you don't want to believe the six days of creation, 24 hour days in the first chapter of Genesis, you don't want to believe that? Where do you kick-in? Do you kick-in at Genesis 2 where there's a literal Adam? Do you kick-in at Genesis 3? Do you kick-in later at the flood? Do you kick-in at Abraham? Where do you start to believe



if you don't take Scripture at its fullness and at its face value? And those questions expose the lie of it. If you pick and choose Scripture, you don't believe Scripture at all. You are your own authority and you have not submitted your mind to the word of God. You have not submitted to Christ. It is a position, a posture of rebellion against God to sit in judgment of his word.

If we consider the great holiness of God and being in the presence of his Shekinah glory, the majesty of his glory which no man can see and live because of its overwhelming sight, as Paul saw Christ on the road to Damascus and it was brighter than the sun, his glory, and we can't look at the sun in its unveiled glory, and the glory of God is greater and we're looking in the glory of God this way, with that mental framework set in place, imagine, imagine the arrogance, the defiance, the rebellion, the sinfulness of being in that presence of the Shekinah glory and saying, "I will determine what you say, whether what you say is true or not." Where is the fear of God in this? Where is a recognition of the holiness and authority of God in these men and in these women who say such things? No. No. No. No. No. No. The Bible is inspired by God. It is inerrant in everything that it says, and we receive it as authoritative, and we submit our minds and our wills to its authority as is appropriate for that which comes from the mind and glory of a God who cannot lie. There is no other book like it. It stands alone as the authority and I hope, I hope, beloved, that you get some kind of a sense of the egregious nature of the sin of men throughout history who have given books and said, "I'm a prophet of God. God has given new revelation to me." It's frightening to me to even enter into the mental realm that makes that happen. It's a demonic realm designed to undermine the authority of Scripture. We don't go there. We can't go there. We won't go there. We receive the Bible alone as our authority.

Now that leads us to a second very important point which is the sufficiency of Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture. What do we mean by the sufficiency of Scripture? Well, this is a most important point. The Bible contains everything that is necessary to find salvation in Christ, to trust him, and to live for him in an acceptable way. Everything that we need to know about how to be saved is found in Scripture. Everything that you need to live a godly, joyful life is found in Scripture. Everything that you need to overcome adversity, to find peace and contentment in your circumstances, is found in Scripture. And that is to be the place that you look for help and comfort is in the truth of Scripture either directly through its pages or through writings and teaching that explain what it means by what it says.

Again, the 1689 Confession says, "The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience." Only Scripture. And here again, the word "only," the word "alone," is what distinguishes matters. There are those who say that, you know, it's fine to talk about the Bible and it's good as far as it goes, but we need other things, in this modern age we need other things to help us. We need psychology to help us work through our difficult problems. That's not true. Scripture alone is sufficient and that is what Scripture says for itself.

Look again at 2 Timothy 3 as we go back to that foundational text. 2 Timothy 3. And because Scripture is God's word, because God is true, and because God is the final authority in the universe, what God says rules our minds and rules our understanding. And so when it comes to matters of evangelism, the Bible is sufficient. The Bible is sufficient to lead someone to saving faith in Christ. 2 Timothy 3:14, Paul says to Timothy, "as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 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." Everything that's needed to convict a man of sin, set forth before him the person and work of Jesus Christ, the reality of saving repentance and faith, everything is found in Scripture for that. We don't need other things outside of Scripture to show us how to be reconciled with God. And so the fact that, for example, I just use this as an example, the fact that Catholics teach seven different sacraments that are necessary to be saved that you must have and must follow and must obey in order to be saved, is by definition false because they are outside of Scripture. Scripture alone is enough to make you wise unto salvation, and so when men start to add conditions and works that must be done in order to be saved that are not found in the pages of the Bible, you know that you can reject them because if they were necessary for your salvation, God would have included them in the Bible because the Bible claims that everything you need to know to be saved is found within its pages.

Vitally important to know and to understand but going further and speaking to the body of Christ and Christians within the room here today, so important for you to know the Bible is sufficient for your sanctification, your spiritual growth, your Christ-likeness. Everything that is essential for you to grow in Christ is found in the pages of Scripture. This is what the Bible says about itself. 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Equipped for every good work. Beloved, whatever position you have in life right now with all of the difficulties, the adversities, the uncertainty, the confusion, where do I go, what do I do, how do I move forward in life, beloved, don't look outside the Bible for that kind of help. Don't look to spiritual gurus of the modern age. Look to Scripture. It is sufficient. That's what it says. If you are to bear fruit for God in the life that he has given you right now, the way forward in that is found in the Bible, by what Scripture says.

And so Paul goes on in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, he says to Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." What happens when people distrust the Bible and think that the Bible is lacking for what they need spiritually? What happens? It's inevitable. Verse 3, "the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." When you start to doubt the ability of the Bible to give you the strength you need to live your life, you're taking a step down a dangerous path because once you turn away from the Bible and your complete trust in the complete sufficiency of the word of God for

the life that God has given you, you turn your back on that and you are opening yourself up to teachers who will lead you away from the truth. A little word of advice from a pastor: don't do that. Don't do that. Just stop. Go to God and confess that you have strayed from your confidence in his word. Confess it as a sin. Ask him to forgive you, and by grace to lead you back to the riches of Scripture which are sufficient for your life and guidance.

Psalm 119:9 says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to your word." And along with that, beloved, turn to Psalm 19 as well. Psalm 19:7 through 9, and look at what the word of God claims for itself about its power to rejuvenate our souls and to help us as we walk through life as the children of God. Psalm 19:7, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Beloved, the Bible says it is perfect and it restores the soul. The Bible says that it is able to take you as a believer and to guide you, to give you wisdom, and to restore joy to your heart.

Now if that is true, then Scripture is sufficient. If we deny that and say that there are things in the realm of human learning, human psychology, human psychiatry, that we need that Scripture doesn't have but we must have these things if we're to get through these particular problems that we have, then Scripture is lying to us. Scripture has told us a lie. It's not perfect. It's not sufficient. It doesn't equip us for every good work. And God has misled us. And if God has misled us, we should just turn off the lights, walk out and go home because we're wasting our time. It's that serious. It's that much of a fork in the road in terms of how you respond to this. If the Bible is perfect, if it's complete, if it's able to revive our souls, then that's what it means, and it's able to do that. To say the Bible is not enough for my needs, beloved, is a denial of Scripture on its face.

Now Scripture does not guide us by telling us everything, by giving us rules for everything that we do, rather it provides enough wisdom and guidance that we can please God as we apply its principles in wisdom to our life. And look, look, beloved, you know, life is hard. I sent a text to the elders a couple of days ago, and I just told them, I said life is so hard, just thinking about matters of ministry that we deal with on an ongoing basis, thinking about, you know, the things that we all go through in our individual lives as our health fails or as difficulties in relationships come up, or whatever, life is so hard. I get that and you do too. The question is where do we find the strength and the guidance and the help and the joy that we need? Well, in order to get through it, we find it in the Scripture. We find it in Christ. Scripture says in Colossians in Christ you have been made complete. If we have a Savior who has loved our souls, and who is guiding our lives and working all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose, then everything in life, beloved, fits under that umbrella. The mistakes that we have made, the sins that we have committed, the sins that others have committed

against us, all find their resolution in the sufficiency of Christ as it's revealed to us in the sufficiency of Scripture. And so if it seems like we're missing something, then we just go back to the word of God and search its pages more and more. We come to hear its teaching. We come to fellowship with his people under the authority of the word of God, and there we find that which is sufficient to strengthen our souls and to live ultimately a trusting, joyful life. But if you deny Scripture, if you deny that Scripture is sufficient and you start looking in other places, what you've done is you've gone and you've stepped and you've put your heel on the air hose of your very spiritual existence.

Now, why would you do that? Why would you do that? God made it clear, even in the Old Testament, that his people were never to look beyond his written word. You don't need to turn there for the sake of time, but in Deuteronomy 4:2 we read this, Deuteronomy 4:2. I'll get there eventually because I want to read it exactly right. Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you." It's an echo of the end of Revelation, "Do not add to the words of this book. Do not take away from them."

Beloved, beloved, if anything further was necessary, Scripture would not be complete and so this is where we come out on it and I pause so that you can kind of catch your breath and take in this most important point: a man, a woman, you take the Bible alone or you do not take it at all. And when we say alone, what we mean is as final authority, that which commands what we are to believe and to do, that which gives us the spiritual resources that are necessary to live life acceptably before God. You take the Bible alone or you do not take it at all because you cannot take Scripture which says, "You shall not add to the word that I command you," that's what the Bible says. The Bible says it's perfect, it's complete, restoring the soul. It says that it is able to give you the faith that leads to salvation in Christ Jesus. It is able to equip you for every good work. That's what it says and if you say, "No, there's something more that I need, there's something else that I believe is that final additional authority," you've just denied Scripture altogether. And if you add to the Bible, you deny the Bible.

And so Sola Scriptura in the context of the Reformation, it rejected Catholic tradition, it rejected the pope, but it also rejects all other claims from books, men or religion that God has spoken through them in a way that he did not speak in the Bible. There is no new revelation. We reject modern revelations and prophecies just as we reject Catholic claims to papal and traditional authority. The Bible and the Bible alone. Beloved, God has given us an authoritative and final book that has all we need to believe in him truly and to live a life that is pleasing to him.

Turn to Isaiah 55 as we close. Isaiah 55. We're leaving some clarifications and qualifications out for the sake of the greater point that we're making here tonight. We have a treasure in the word of God and we read in Isaiah 55:10, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish

that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." God has given us a powerful, authoritative, inspired, inerrant, sufficient word, beloved. You should have a high view of Scripture, the highest view of Scripture. The question is, do you and do you trust it for what it says?

Let's pray together.

*Gracious God, I pray that you would ever more and ever more increase our confidence in the authority and sufficiency of your word. Guide us from men and from teaching that would lead us astray. Give us the courage and strength that we need and the understanding that we need to study this word, to believe this word, to practice this word. And Father, as we do that, may you fill our hearts with the joy of having found the truth as you have revealed it in your word and revealed it in the person of Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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