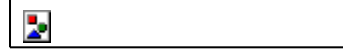


Sola Scriptura

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Last year in the month of October in 2017, we honored the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with a series that was titled "The Bible and Roman Catholicism." That turned into be about a 10 message series but it occurred to me that that maybe was a good tradition to kind of build upon, maybe every October to take an opportunity to focus on something related to the Reformation or Reformation theology in order to keep us grounded and to have a regular commitment where we are reviewing the things that make, broadly speaking, Protestant theology distinct. We need to know these things and not just assume them. We need to be able to transmit them to our children. We need to have them anchored in such a way that anyone who is reasonably regular in attendance at Truth Community Church could articulate the basic principles of what makes us distinct from Catholics, stated differently, what is the essence of biblical Christianity, and to be able to articulate those things and to understand them. One of the quickest ways to lose the truth that you hold dear, one of the ways that churches drift and seminaries drift over time is by the fact that they start to assume the things that were believed in the past rather than repeating them and articulating them and holding them up and keeping them fresh in the minds of everyone who is associated with them. So we don't want to go down that path if we can avoid it, and so this year to honor the Reformation, the 501st anniversary of the Reformation, I want to cover what has come to be known as the Five Solas of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura; Sola Gratia; Sola Fide; Solus Christos; and Soli Deo Gloria. And back in August, you may remember that I did a single overview message of all five of them in a message titled "Five Solas, One Faith." We have copies of this out on the table. I would encourage you to pick one up if you didn't get a copy of that message. What we want to do now is over this week and over the next four weeks, is to just develop each of those individual themes in their own right, and I think it's a privilege for us to be able to do this; of course, I think it's a privilege every time we come together like this to open God's word and study it together.

The various forms of Sola that are expressed in those Five Solas are from the Latin term meaning "alone." If you think about the word, the English word "solitary," it means something that stands alone, something that is by itself, and Sola Scriptura tells us that we base our faith on Scripture alone. Sola Scriptura means that we do not accept or recognize other claims to revelation. And brothers and sisters, that is a most significant principle for us to understand and to embrace because as soon you understand and embrace that principle, you have knocked out Roman Catholicism completely. As soon you understand and embrace that principle, you are guarded against all of the wacky

errors of charismatic theology today. This determines what it is that we build our faith on and it gives us the strength, it gives us the discernment to be able to say no to what other claims of revelation are made. Scripture is exclusive. Scripture stands alone. Scripture is by itself, and when I say Scripture, I like to say this, I say this an awful lot, it's because after I'm gone I want you to remember things like this, when we talk about Scripture, we mean the 66 books of the Bible, 66 and no more, and when we say that, we are excluding the Apocrypha from consideration as being inspired Scripture, and other forms and other claims to revelation. This is all just so very very important. When we talk about Sola Scriptura, we are talking about the doctrine that frames all of the other debates about theology. What is our source for revealed truth? Where do we find that which tells us the truth about the nature of God and the nature of salvation? And the answer in that is Sola Scriptura, in Scripture alone.

Let me quote a couple of paragraphs from the 1689 Confession, which we use as our Confession of Faith here at Truth Community Church. In paragraph 1.6 it says this and I quote, "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." That's paragraph 1.6 of the 1689 Confession which would parallel what is stated in the Westminster Confession of a few decades earlier. Listen to paragraph 1.10 of our Confession, it says, "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, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved." In other words, what it's saying to summarize it in today's language would be to say this, is that everything that we are to believe and to obey is found in the four corners of Scripture and we are not to look outside of them. That means that when a flashy preacher, male or female, stands up and says, "Let me tell you about what God told me today and the vision that God has given me for this or that," we immediately reject that because we hold to Sola Scriptura, because we say that there is nothing to be added at any time to the 66 books of the Bible. When Catholics come and say, "Well, we want to talk about our tradition," we say, "No, thank you. We believe in Sola Scriptura. There is nothing that is equal to the Bible." When sometimes an uninformed perhaps well-meaning person says, "God spoke to me and told me such and such," we say, "God didn't talk to you that way. God did not reveal something new to you. Everything that God has said is contained in the Bible and in the Bible alone."

Now as I said when we were doing this series in that message from a few months ago, "Five Solas, One Faith" that I alluded to earlier, one of the things that I said was that the battle on these Five Solas is not about Scripture per se, it's not about grace per se, or faith per se, or Christ per se, or the glory of God per se, because lots of religions would pay heed or give lip-service to the Bible; lots of people would say nice things about Jesus, "Oh, I believe he was a great man or a great prophet," or they'll say, "Yes, we need God's grace," but what they won't say, the step that they won't take is when you say "alone," because when you say "Scripture alone," you are making an implicit denial of all other

claims to revelation, and all of a sudden when you're saying "Scripture alone," all of a sudden you are opening yourself up to an accusation that you are a narrowminded bigot; that you think truth belongs to you alone; that you are arrogant; "That may be your opinion but my opinion is equally valid," people will say. You see, people object to the word "alone" because it closes off the door to the pride of man, to the works of men, to other forms of revelation.

So this word "alone" is so very critical and that's what we want to kind of look at here this evening as this doctrine of Scripture alone, Sola Scriptura, and we're going to break this down and help you hopefully be able to help you and others who hear this in the future by just kind of building this concept around two basic principles of Scripture: the authority of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture. Both of those aspects of the doctrine of the Bible are implied by this term Sola Scriptura. So let's look, first, at the authority of Scripture and why we would believe in the authority of Scripture alone, okay? The authority of Scripture for your first heading if you're taking notes here this evening.

What is authority? Well, we've even preached on that concept over time, but authority, by authority we mean in this context that – oh, this is so basic and so very important. You know, it's when you get tired of the basics that you're vulnerable to spiritual error. When you get tired of the basics, you're vulnerable to doctrinal error. When you get tired of the basics, you are vulnerable to sin in your life. You know, we are meant to go back. Just as you drink water or you have some kind of liquid refreshment day by day by day, you go back to these things and you drink from them repeatedly again and again because just as liquid water is necessary for the health of your body, so things like this are necessary for the regular intake for the health of your soul. Authority in this context means this: the Bible alone is the standard by which all truth claims are measured. The Bible alone is the standard by which all truth claims are measured and so when we say the authority of Scripture, what we mean is this: Scripture alone is to determine what we believe and what we do. Scripture alone determines what we believe and what we do. We believe everything that Scripture says, we do not go beyond it.

Why would we be so dogmatic about that? As I told you recently, you know, people have challenged me on that point, "What makes you think that you could call yourself Truth Community Church? On what basis would you say those kinds of things and name yourself by that?" Well, beloved, what we need to understand and recognizes this, is that we are building our doctrine and what we teach and what we believe, we route that in Scripture. It's not our own idea. We are responding to, we are explaining something that is outside of us; something that is given to us; something that is independent of our minds, of our thinking; something that existed and that was true before you and I were born; something that will exist and will be true after we are gone, if the Lord tarries. We are talking about things that transcend time and that are independent of our own opinion.

So the authority of Scripture, what we want to understand is this, is that it derives from its own very nature. It is independent of the judgment of men. How can we say something like that? Well, it's the Bible's own claim and here we've got a couple of subpoints that I

want to make. The authority of Scripture is based on this fact, that Scripture is inspired. Scripture is inspired. Now we've talked about these things often over the course of time, but let's ask and answer the question once again. Again, you know, I pause on these things because these kinds of questions are so fundamental. Get this right and you set the right trajectory. You understand that if a plane gets off course by just five degrees, the immediate difference isn't too great but as you go along, it's further and further off course until it's nowhere near its intended destination, but if you set the trajectory true and right from the beginning, then you're going to end up at the proper destination. Here the proper destination is to arrive at truth as God has revealed it, to believe it, and to obey it; to believe the truth about Christ so that our souls are safe and secure in him rather than believing in falsehoods that cannot save our soul, trusting ourselves to things that are not true and finding that we are damned in the end. That's not a good outcome for life and when we say things and ask questions like where did the Bible come from, what is its source, we are asking fundamental questions that put us in the right direction.

With all of those things said, turn in your Bible to 2 Timothy 3:16, and as you're turning there, I would just make the happy observation that once again God's providence is serving us well. The timing of these messages coincides unintentionally with our series that we're doing on the Holy Spirit on Sunday mornings, and these things fit together like a hand in a glove and they mutually reinforce each other even though we are really not repeating much from Sunday to Tuesday in the things that we'll be saying here over the next several weeks. 2 Timothy 3:16 says this in the New American Standard version which we use as our pulpit Bible, 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." We want to zero in on that word "inspired." The Greek term is "theopneustos," it means "God-breathed." The Bible originated from a divine activity. It is not the doctrine of Scripture that men wrote words of their own ability and of their own insight and then God came along and breathed a divine quality into them after the fact. That is not the biblical doctrine of inspiration. It has the idea that God breathed out Scripture; from within his own essence, from within his own knowledge, from within his own perfect intention, he breathed out what Scripture was to say. The Bible proceeds from God, from inside God and out, you might say, and therefore we rightly call it the word of God.

Let me expand on this a little bit. To say that the Bible is inspired in this way, is infinitely more than saying that the human authors were poetically gifted or that they had unique insight into the state of human affairs. You will hear people who are artistically inclined saying something like, saying things like this, "Oh, I was positively inspired as I wrote that poem." We should not talk that way as Christians because it confuses the issue. When the word is used like that in the human realm, it's talking about human insight or human emotion, human elevation, and that is not what we are talking about in Scripture. What we are saying when Scripture alone and Sola Scriptura about the inspiration of Scripture is this, is that God initiated Scripture. God so worked through the human authors of Scripture that the Bible says exactly what God wanted it to say and he did this in a voluntary act of self-disclosure. God, in other words, who is spirit, God who is invisible, God who is unknowable by the fallen human mind except in a very basic way that you can observe his power somewhat in nature, to know him as the saving God as he

is revealed in Jesus Christ is outside human comprehension. We are blind and we are dead to those things. We cannot discover them on their own because they are spiritually discerned and we, in our unsaved state, are spiritually dead; spiritually dead, lifeless, undiscerning, unable to know these things. So the inspiration of Scripture is the means by which God revealed himself in the written word of God.

How did that happen? What was that process like? Look over at 2 Peter 1 and here we have another very key text that helps us understand the doctrine of Scripture. 2 Peter 1:20 says this, it says, "know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will," no writing of Scripture ever came as a result of human intention originating in the human will, he says, "but," by contrast, "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." What the Bible says about itself is that the writers of Scripture were moved by the Holy Spirit, a power from God outside of them, outside of their own ability, outside of their own and beyond their own will; a power from God came upon them and moved them in the writing of Scripture so that what they wrote was the very word of God.

Now this word "moved, the men were moved by the Holy Spirit," is the same verb that describes a ship being carried along by the wind. You can see this in the book of Acts 27, if you want to turn back there with me for just a moment. Keep your finger in 2 Peter. In Acts 27:15, the same verb although it's translated differently in English, is used to describe a ship and in Acts 27:15 it says, "when the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along." The idea is that the ship was now subject to a power that was greater than itself. Its direction was being determined by the wind. It went where the wind drove it. The wind was driving it by its own power. Beloved, that physical picture gives us a sense of the spiritual dynamic that was going on when men were writing the words of Scripture. As they wrote the word of God, as they were writing the letters of Scripture and the prophecies of Scripture, they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. The Holy Spirit was directing their thoughts, was directing their words, was directing them in a way so that what they recorded was exactly, precisely and no more than exactly what God wanted them to say. They were under a power from God that transcended their human abilities, okay?

Now, one of the things, one of the objections that is raised against this doctrine of inerrancy, the inerrancy of Scripture, is this, and it sounds superficially plausible, it sounds superficially like a serious objection. It's not but if you haven't thought it through, at first it sounds like it. They'll start with this premise, "All men are fallible, right? Men are subject to error, right? Right. The Bible was written by men, right? True. Right. There were human authors to the Scripture." And they think when they lay out that little logical progression, they think they've got you, "Well, you see it, don't you? All men are fallible. Scripture was written by men, therefore, Scripture itself is fallible. Scripture itself is subject and full of errors and, therefore, you cannot trust it. You cannot believe it in an absolute sense." What's our response to that? How do we think through that? Well, we come back to this doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture and we say, "No, you're leaving out the most important aspect of the nature of Scripture. Scripture is inspired by God. God is omnipotent, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent, and the Holy Spirit came upon these

men in a way that directed what they wrote so that what they wrote was the very word of God, and what you're forgetting, my objecting unbelieving friend, is this, is that God, the Holy Spirit, has the power to override the fallibility of men so that they produce what God wanted them to produce, what God wanted them to write. There is a supernatural dimension to the authorship of Scripture that preserved it from error in a way that a merely human production could not claim." The Bible says over and over again, claims that it is the word of God, that it is perfect. You know, "Thus saith the Lord," is the predominant voice that comes out of the 66 books of the Bible. This book, metaphorically speaking, steps up and speaks out, "Thus saith the Lord," and bears witness to its own divine authority. How does it do that? Why does it do that? It's because the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture in a way that preserved it from all error. It carried these men into a safe harbor, you might say, so that they did not write error. The determinative final influence in the final product of Scripture was not the mind of man but the mind of God directed by the Holy Spirit. That's what we mean when we say Scripture is inspired. This is what the Bible claims for itself.

Now, look, it's just very important for us to repeat and to remember what we said. This exists outside of our opinion. We believe it, yes, we respect it, we proclaim it, we assert it, but we are asserting something that is independent that is outside of ourselves. We are merely repeating what God himself has said about Scripture. We are thinking God's thoughts after him when we say these things about the Bible and that's what gives it its truth, not our opinion but what God himself has said about his word. It came from the Spirit of God.

Now, that has implications. God is a God of truth. Scripture says in Titus 1:2, that it is impossible for God to lie. He is omniscient. He does not make mistakes. He is perfect in every way. And that has implications for the kind of book that he would produce, and that leads us to our second aspect of the authority of Scripture and we say this, we say that Scripture is inerrant. Scripture is inerrant, and as I say so often, it's only because I feel this way when I preach, it is a great privilege for me to stand and declare these things and to defend them and to give my life over to the defense of these things over against those who would mock it or dispute it. I don't care. I don't care what anybody else thinks, my mind, my heart belongs to this book and it always will until the day I die.

Now secondly, as we say Scripture is inerrant, we want to say this, we want to help you understand this and the progression of this: because God is the God of truth, because it is impossible for God to lie, because the Bible is inspired by God in the way in which we have described earlier, because the Bible has been supervised down to its very words by the God of truth, we can be confident that it is free from error; that there are not mistakes in the true teaching of Scripture; that there are not factual errors. As we've pointed out in the past, there are so many different directions you could go on this, as we've looked at Scripture in the past, we have seen that Jesus Christ who is Lord, who is the supreme authority in the universe, affirmed the Old Testament and pre-authenticated, you might say, the New Testament. All of the Bible comes under the authority and the affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ himself is the ultimate guarantor of the truth of Scripture.

Now, and I'm glad you young people are listening. I can tell that you're listening and I love you for it, and I just pray that God would seal these things deep in your heart and that you would become lions for the kinds of truth that we're talking about here tonight and in the days to come; that you would roar, as it were, on behalf of Scripture, roar on behalf of the God of this word even when it is unpopular to do so. Jesus said in John 17:17, he said as he was praying for his people, he said, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth." It is truth. In other words, Scripture says things and declares things the way that they really are. Scripture tells us what really is, the way things actually happen, what is really true and what will really happen in the end. From beginning to end, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:20, you have that which is true, that which is accurate, that which is the way that things really are, and that is rooted in the fact that Scripture is inspired by God and God is a God of truth. These things go together. They are welded together in a perfect unbreakable harmony and there can be no divorce put between the attributes of God and the attributes of Scripture. That is vital for you to understand. We build our lives on that basic truth and, therefore, what does that mean? It means that Scripture, the 66 books of the Bible, you see, I just repeat the same things over and over again. I'm like the guy at a party that only has like five jokes that he just cycles through, but if you hang around long enough, you start to hear the same things over and over again. Well, that's kind of some of what we do and we realize that Scripture itself speaks this way. Peter said, "I want to stir you up by way of reminder." Even the writers of Scripture were conscious of the fact that they were repeating things again to their readers. Well, if the inspired writers needed to do that for the first century audience, how much more should a 21st century pastor repeat things so that they are embedded deeply into the fabric of your soul, the fabric of your thinking, so that your worldview does not have room for any contrary thought to that which Scripture compels us to believe and do?

Now, what does that mean when we say Scripture is inerrant? Scripture never affirms anything that is contrary to fact. Scripture never affirms a falsehood. Whether it is speaking to spiritual realities concerning the nature of God and the nature of sin and the nature of Christ and the nature of salvation, whether it is speaking in the moral realm, whether it is speaking to facts of history, whether it is speaking to facts of science, wherever Scripture speaks on these issues, wherever it touches on matters of scientific or historical fact, Scripture is correct. Scripture is right. Scripture is true. It never affirms anything that is contrary to fact. Theologian Robert Raymond says it this way, "Scripture is incapable of teaching error."

Now, sometimes Scripture will record men who are speaking lies, Scripture will record men who are saying inaccurate things, but Scripture is not affirming what those men said, rather it is simply accurately reporting what they said. So we've distinguished between what Scripture actually affirms and what it merely records in the course of the human history that it describes. Scripture is without error. Scripture is trustworthy in whole. Scripture is trustworthy in all of its parts. The 66 books of the Bible originated with God and he used a process according to his infinite power, his infinite ability, his infinite knowledge, his infinite understanding that guaranteed the final absolute accuracy of

Scripture. No exceptions. No exceptions. None. Zero. Nada. Nein, for the German. Not the number nine, that would contradict what I just said.

So what does that mean, beloved? It means this: we reject any effort to marginalize inerrancy. People will marginalize inerrancy by saying, "Well, yes, Scripture is inerrant but only in matters of faith or morals. You can't trust it in matters of history or other matters of human endeavor." They leave open the possibility for errors in other matters but say that it is inerrant in matters of faith and morals. Now that sounds tempting, you know, and you can see where people might want to do that and eliminate the criticisms that come from outside of Scripture and to insulate yourself, and men have gone shipwreck on this rock of this hidden rock in the seas of teaching, thinking that, "Well, if we can just preserve inerrancy in faith, then we can allow for other errors in the Bible." That may sound tempting but do you know what? That doesn't work at all for multiple multiple reasons. First of all, Christianity is a historical faith. Jesus Christ really came in time and space. God revealed his truth. His people lived in time and space and his word was given in time and space history. To undermine the history is to undermine the very platform on which it was delivered to us. Not only that, beloved, think about it this way and understand this, that what does that ultimately do? Rather than having the Bible over us and sitting in judgment on us as is the truth and reality of the matter, this puts Scripture below us and says, "I will stand in judgment of Scripture. I will determine what is true and what is false." And the locus, the basis of authority is now rooted in the mind of man who declares what is true and what is not. That can't possibly be correct and it's not correct. It places man in judgment of the Bible and you're left with a man to tell you what will or will not be believed.

What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to just wait until the scholars finish their tennis match back and forth and they decide over the course of several decades or a few centuries and they come to some kind of an agreement about what is true and what is not? Do we have to wait for surety for the security of our soul until men have finished their endless debates, as unbelievers inject their opinions, as they distort and twist the word of God so that it conforms to their image rather than conforming their soul to the image of Christ? Out on the thought. Under no circumstances is that what God gave to us in Scripture, as if he had given us fodder for our own discussions and debates back and forth while God sits on the sideline waiting for man to determine what's true in his word and what is not. Out on the suggestion. "Go home. Go away," we say to those who want to take that kind of an approach to the Bible. I'm not saying that to you in this room. That is not what Scripture is and that is not the response of man to it. God inspired all of the words so that everything that Scripture says and affirms is true, it is right, and it will bear the test of time and examination.

Now, there is one other observation to make about this from the words of Scripture itself. Look at John 3. The course of my preparation of this series brought me to an interesting perspective that honestly I hadn't seen before, hadn't considered before. Remember, we're addressing the idea here in this portion of the message, what we're arguing against and rejecting is are those who would hold to a partial inerrancy, say faith and morals, the Bible is inerrant, but in earthly matters of history and other things, Scripture is subject to

mistaken error. Well, look at John 3:12. Jesus said, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" If I cannot be trusted, Jesus says, if you can't believe me when I tell you matters of lesser consequence that pertain to the things of the earth, on what basis would you possibly believe when I tell you heavenly things that are outside your experience and that you cannot see or experience with your human senses? How can you believe the greater thing if you won't believe the lesser thing? To question the lesser things is automatically to invoke doubt and suspicion upon the greater things. No. No, we believe God here. We trust God here. We trust his word here. If God has said it in his word, we believe it. We trust it.

Now, that doesn't mean that there are no difficulties, it doesn't mean that there aren't challenges in some of the matters of interpretation which we face. We can recognize those, we can acknowledge those, we can work through those, but we do so from a position of trust and belief. If our judgment seems to differ with the Bible, we say, "The problem can't be with the Bible. I must be missing something. Maybe I need more information. Maybe my interpretation of the verse is wrong. Maybe I'm distorted somewhere." But we place our confidence in Scripture and we doubt our judgment if it would lead us to be opposed to the words of Scripture. There is no other book like the Bible. It stands alone as the authority. That's why we hold to Sola Scriptura.

Now, let's go to a second aspect of this doctrine rather quickly and we'll look at the sufficiency of Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture. Scripture is sufficient. What we mean by that is this: the Bible contains everything that is necessary to find salvation in Christ, to trust him, and to obey him in a way that is acceptable to God. The Bible has everything that we need for that. That excludes other revelation. That excludes Catholic tradition. It excludes the Pope. It excludes their magisterium. It excludes everything else. It excludes the book of Mormon.

You know, I remember decades ago talking with a couple of Mormon missionaries before I was a brand-new Christian and I didn't, you know, I hadn't had opportunity to learn or study these things. Their technique back then, I imagine, I suspect that it is the same today is that they'll talk this way, I'm about to describe something only to reject it. They say, "You have a Bible, right? Well, you drive a stake through the Bible and you can turn it any way that you want to, and so what you need is a second stake through the Bible so that it stands firm," and they say, "That second stake is the book of Mormon. God has given a new revelation that prevents people from twisting and turning the Bible around." That's what they said to me at the time. Well, that is an utter denial of the Bible's own teaching about itself. We do not need another book of revelation, we simply need to study and to believe and to teach and to proclaim the 66 books of revelation that have already been given to us, is what we need. And again, our 1689 Confession says this about the sufficiency of Scripture, I quote, "The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience." It is sufficient. It is enough. It has everything that is needed to point us and to give us what we need to obey God acceptably, to know Christ, to trust him. Everything necessary is included in Scripture.

Now, you can see why false religions would have to attack this very doctrine because you are not going to find the Catholic doctrines about Mary, about purgatory, about priests, and all those other things that we covered last year, you're not going to find them within the four corners of the Bible. The only way that they can promulgate those satanic deceptions is by saying there is another equal source of authority. They have to expand the authority in order to inject the error. If you exclude the additional revelation, the whole edifice collapses just like the Twin Towers came tumbling down on 9/11, and that's why this so very important.

Go back to 2 Timothy 3 with me, if you would. 2 Timothy 3. When we say that Scripture is sufficient, here's what we mean, we mean that the Bible is sufficient for evangelism. It is sufficient to lead a man, Scripture alone is sufficient to lead a man to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul says in verse 14, he says, "You, however," in contrast to the impostors who are deceiving and being deceived from verse 13, by contrast, Timothy, here's what I want you to do, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Paul told Timothy, "What you have heard is already sufficient. The sacred writings that you have known from childhood are enough to lead a man to true salvation through faith in Christ." Scripture is sufficient for evangelism. It's sufficient to bring a man to salvation in Christ.

What about when he's in Christ? Well, the Bible is sufficient for sanctification, that is, progress in spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. Verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and," what? "And profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." As you walk through life and you encounter different relationships and different situations, there is within Scripture everything that is necessary to give you the wisdom to obey God and to honor him acceptably through whatever may come to you. Through death, through joy, through adversity, through sorrow, through loss, the word of God is sufficient to teach you. When you are straying into sin, it is sufficient to reprove you, to point out your error and then to correct you and to point you in the right path, and having been put back on the right path, to train you in further righteousness.

Beloved, I thank God that you are faithful to be under the word of God Sunday, Tuesday, week after week. I thank God for that because I know what the word of God does in the hearts of those who believe and that attend the word of God faithfully. It shapes you into the image of Christ and we don't need a bunch of other programs, we don't need a lot of outside stuff to accomplish that result. The word of God when it is taught and when you receive it and believe it and read it for yourself and you study it for yourself, there is an intrinsic power in the word of God to shape you into the image of Christ. It is the tool God gave us to that end and that's why that's what we focus on. That's why we emphasize it. That's why it's central to us. You know, I mean, I get emotional thinking about these things because it's just so very vital. These words are your life. These words are your manna from heaven. They are your sustenance. They are what will shape you into what God would have you to be, and the closer that we come to Scripture, the more that we

expose ourselves to its truth, the more that we submit to it, the more that we believe it, the more that we obey it, the more fully its power is unleashed in our lives. That's why we do what we do. The Bible is sufficient to guide you. Psalm 119:9, you don't need to turn there, it says, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" How can a young man keep his way pure? "By keeping it according to Your word."

Now, we just kind of touched on things, evangelism, sanctification, guidance. You know, I just kind of finished up a message that I'm going to preach several weeks from now. People want, people claim that God speaks to them and, "God told me what to do today. God told me where to go to find my parking space. God told me this. God spoke to me that." Beloved, we should not talk that way. That is a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture. Everything that we need is found in the Bible and the Bible is sufficient and the Bible is finished. We should not be looking for some mysterious voice of God to speak to us as if we wanted private guidance for our lives today. Do you know what? You already have the best guidance for your life given to you in the word of God. It cannot be improved upon. The word of God, Psalm 19 says, is perfect. It could not be perfect if we needed other outside revelation to help us in our daily life. Scripture would not be perfect if that was the plan of God for the growth and provision of his people. So we should not talk that way. I understand that some people speak loosely, some people speak based on prior experience when they were thinking about things differently and they haven't fully grown into the fullness of what Scripture would say about itself but, beloved, I want you to know we're going to talk about that in greater detail at the end of November, Lord willing, but for now just simply to point out to you that that is not the way maturing Christians should speak and we should not think that way because we realize that we have in the word of God everything that is necessary for life and godliness. As some have said, if you want to hear the word of God, read the Bible. If you want an audible word from God, word from God, read it out loud.

Now, the beauty of Scripture, the genius of Scripture, the wisdom of God in Scripture, it doesn't give us rules for everything that we do, the Bible doesn't work that way which just reminded me of something. This is a big big tangent and this is just kind of an unnecessary story but it's kind of cool. Shar MoneyMaker and Will might remember this message but they're not here with us. Shar's surgery is tomorrow morning. Ten or 15 years I was talking about this point and I made an offhanded statement when I was talking about this point in a completely unrelated setting when Truth Community Church was not on anybody's mind whatsoever. We've been at this for almost 7 years. This was 10, 12 or 15 years ago, I don't even remember how long ago it was. I made the passing offhanded statement in a message that said, "Now God's not going to tell you whether you should go to Cincinnati or not." I was in Los Angeles, California when I said that. I had no intention, I had no thought of Truth Community Church. I had no thought of being here, I just in this offhanded way said that and now look at it, here I am 15 years later and I'm in Cincinnati, Ohio. But do you know what? God didn't need and I didn't need a voice from God to tell me that, to tell me to go to Cincinnati. I didn't need a verse in Scripture to whisper to my heart, "Don, go to Cincinnati." It doesn't work that way. God works, God directs us as we embrace, as we meditate, as we live by the broader principles of Scripture, and then in his providence, in relationships, in circumstances, he directs us

where he wants us to go. He led me to Cincinnati without telling me to go there. Isn't that awesome? Isn't that cool? And isn't it an amazing piece of providence that those words could come out of my mouth unprompted 15 years earlier and now here I am with all of you. I didn't know any of you with the exception of my family and one or two others, I didn't know any of you when I said that. I had no idea about Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road, and yet here we are. God guided apart from some kind of imaginary voice, and what we see in that is that Scripture guides us and helps us to fulfill the plan of God without specific words telling us what to do in specific situations.

Now, the sufficiency of Scripture is also reinforced by its finality. Look at the last verses in the Bible. I said Revelation 22:20 earlier, there's actually 21 verses in the closing chapter of Revelation. But in verses 18 and 19 in the concluding prophecy that is the capstone of all of Scripture and it is obvious by the content of the book of Revelation that there is no more to be said because it leads us into the eternal state, at the conclusion of a book like that, the Bible says, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." The Bible ends on a warning, "Don't add to this book. Don't take away from it. Teach it all but don't claim revelation for anything else." We are not to look beyond the written word.

Beloved, if further revelation from God was necessary, Scripture would not be complete. If something else was necessary, Scripture would not be perfect, it would be lacking, and yet the whole of testimony, look at Psalm 19, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul." It is perfect. It is complete. It is absolute. It is the final word from God. So we say that you take the Bible alone or you do not take it at all because that is the testimony of Scripture to itself. Beloved, if you add to the Bible, if you say we must have other revelation, we must have a second stake as those Mormon missionaries told me so many years ago, if you add to the Bible, beloved – mark this, write this down, I've said it before, I'll say it again – if you add to the Bible like that, you deny the Bible. You cannot have it both ways. God said about himself, "I will not share my glory with another." Scripture says by all its teaching about itself that it will not share its glory with another. The Bible does not share its glory as the unique revelation of God with any other book, with any other claim by man. It preempts that. It forbids it. It states firmly *Sola Scriptura*. There is no new revelation. We reject all claims from other books, men or religion that God has given them new revelation. We reject Catholic tradition, we reject the Pope, we reject modern revelations, we reject claims to modern prophecies in the same exact way. *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone is the teaching of the Bible, it is the teaching of the Reformation.

You know, one of the things that I want to remind you of, one of the things that we were intentional about in the formation of this church is that the things that we are saying here, you know I quoted from the 1689 Confession, so that's coming up on, what, it's 330th anniversary? We're not saying anything new here. We are identifying with the streams of Reformation, Protestant understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. Even if what we are

saying is in the minority position today, we are standing in the stream of what church history has taught ever since the great men of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and others like them. It's not that we have moved, it's that today's church has moved away from the rich tradition given to it. We are not the ones being divisive here, it is those who are denying what the church has taught over centuries that are being divisive. They are the ones injecting something new, not us. It is crucial for you to understand that. Yes, they will make the accusation that we are being divisive by excluding their claims but the truth is just the opposite. Scripture is a seamless cloth and they have come to rip it in order to make room for the figments of their own imagination. It is not divisive to reject that and to say no and to stand against that. That's not divisive at all, that's just simply doing what we can in our humble feeble way to be faithful.

Now let me finish with just some very brief clarifications here, just some very brief clarifications, three or four of them here just as we close. This will just take a couple of minutes. Sola Scriptura does not eliminate the need for the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us understanding. As we teach, as we study, we grow, we understand things that we didn't understand a year or two or 10 years ago, we start to understand and grow in our understanding, that's the work of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit but we recognize the Holy Spirit works through the word, not apart from it, to help us in that way.

Sola Scriptura does not eliminate the need for human teachers. Ephesians 4:11 through 13 speaks about how God gave apostles and prophets and pastors and teachers and others for the building up of the church, but those men explain Scripture rather than giving new revelation. Do you see the difference? Critical distinction. I never come to you saying, "God gave me a new word this morning. God gave me a vision for this church." We don't talk that way because God is not giving new revelation through men today, rather he equips men to teach the word that has already been completed and given and by explaining that, God gives us teachers to help us understand. They explain Scripture rather than giving new revelation.

Finally, Sola Scriptura does not eliminate the need for disciplined study of God's word. 2 Timothy 2:15 if you want to turn there. I think you're in 2 Timothy 3, I don't know where I left you off. I got off on my Cincinnati story and lost all sense of time. But in 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul tells his disciple as he passes the baton to him, he says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." "Timothy, be diligent. Apply yourself to this. Take pains with it." Why? I ask you, why would Paul tell him that if the means of God's direction going forward was going to be new words of revelation, private words given day by day? Why the need for study if God was just going to bypass his word in order to direct his people? Do you know why you need study? It's because God doesn't speak that way. He has given us a full, complete, accurate, inerrant, sufficient word and now his call to us as individuals and as a church corporately is to study it. So in Sola Scriptura we find that 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.

Let me close by reading Isaiah 55, beginning in verse 10. Isaiah 55:10, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." Scripture calls us to a high view of God's word. You should have a high view of the Bible. Do you?

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word. We pray that you would give us clarity individually and corporately, that you would seal these things to our heart. We pray for our young people, Father, that I spoke to personally a few moments ago, and we do pray, Father, that you would raise up from among them, indeed in each one of them, Father, make them lions that roar for your word, make them giants that tower above the opinions of men because of their commitment and understanding and articulation of your word. Grant to them the desire for your word, a desire to understand it, a desire to be faithful to it, a desire to read and understand and appropriate it and to obey it. Yes, Father, grant us that measure of grace upon these young people that are before us here tonight. Help us as adults, those with leadership responsibilities, those who model in the later years of our lives what it means to be a Christian, Father, help us to model that same love for your word, that same commitment. Father, help us to model after those men who have given decades of their lives to the proclamation of Scripture, Father, not because we want to be like men but because we want to be faithful to you, to the God who has revealed himself in this perfect, inerrant, sufficient, inspired word of God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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