

Sola Scriptura

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2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NKJV) “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV) “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

When the church departs from Scripture as its sole authority for truth and practice, it steps upon a theological banana peel causing a tragic descent into deception, darkness, decay, and death. Revival, on the other hand, is a return to true worship which is defined and established by the Word of God. Revival happens when the Bible is restored to the center of the Christian life. Revival happens when the Word of God is accepted as the absolute standard of truth, preached with absolute authority, and obeyed with absolute submission.

There are movements today that are falsely being called “revival” because they are not based upon a return to the Word of God. Most are a mystical mess allowing all kinds of subjective experiences, prophecies, and practices that are out of bounds with the Word of God. They are a reproach to God and true revival. Revival will come upon the heels of a new Reformation in the church.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century occurred when men within the Roman Catholic Church tried to correct error and abuse through an appeal to the authority of Scripture. During the Middle Ages (often called the Dark Ages) the Roman Catholic Church became corrupt through substituting in the place of Scripture things such as church tradition, ecclesiastical hierarchies, church councils, and papal authority. Church leaders became greedy and robbed people of their money through the selling of indulgences to escape the torment of a fictional place called *Purgatory*. Salvation became based upon a system of works and keeping a list of sacraments from birth until death. During the sixteenth century, Reformers such as Martin Luther began to challenge this corrupt system with the Word of God. Luther began to challenge the absolute authority of the Pope over the church because of his doctrine of indulgences. He maintained that freedom from punishment for sin could not be purchased with money. He maintained that salvation was by faith alone without reference to good works, alms, penance, or the Church’s sacraments. He maintained the priesthood of all believers rather than an elite class of priests within the Church. He also challenged the authority of the church by maintaining that all doctrines and dogmata of the Church not founded upon Scripture be discarded. Luther posted these objections in his now famous *Ninety-Five Thesis* that he nailed to door of All Saint’s Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. At that time Luther’s intention was to bring reformation to the Roman Catholic Church rather than to break away from it.

In response the Roman Catholic Church asserted that God had given it the keys of the kingdom and thus the legal authority to change the requirements of the Word of God. They asserted that Scripture *and* Roman church tradition were the source of authority and salvation. Martin Luther held to *Sola Scriptura* (Latin for “Scripture alone”) as the only source of divine truth. In 1521 at the Diet of Worms, a town on the Rhine River in Germany, the Roman Catholic Church demanded that Luther recant his writings in sixty days or be excommunicated from the Church.

Martin Luther did not recant. Rather he said "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." By using the word "safe" Luther meant that violating one's conscience regarding the word of God endangers one's very soul. Martin Luther was excommunicated and a decree was issued on May 25, 1521 by Emperor Charles V for his capture. Martin Luther escaped capture and certain death only because Prince Frederick III of Germany protected him in the Wartburg Castle. Luther would later pen the words of the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" in reflection of God's protection.

"Sola Scriptura" became the rallying cry of the Reformation. The return to the sole authority of Scripture signaled the time when the "light" of truth came back on in Christianity and the Dark Ages began to break. The Reformers believed that *Sola Scriptura* was the foundation for four other Solas: *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone); *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone); *Sola Christos* (Christ Alone); and *Sola de la Gloria* (The Glory of God Alone). Some ask, "Why are these terms in Latin?" It is because Latin was the official language of the Roman Church.

The Reformers believed that these five *Solas* stood together as one declaration of the gospel of salvation. To illustrate, imagine a temple resting upon the foundation of *Sola Scriptura*. Upon this foundation are three massive pillars that frame and uphold the gospel in three basic propositions: *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone), *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), and *Sola Christos* (Christ Alone). What the Reformers were saying is that "Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone." The roof over this entire temple structure is "*Sola de la Gloria*"—the Glory of God! In contrast, Rome asserted that the foundation of the church is Scripture *and* church tradition established through ecclesiastical hierarchies, church councils, and papal authority. Rome built upon this foundation with good works, church membership, church attendance, baptism, marriage, last rites, indulgences, Mary, the treasury of merit, etc. The Reformers rejected Rome's compromise with *Sola Scriptura*. The Reformers also rejected the Anabaptists and the Libertines who held that their dreams, visions, new revelations, and prophetic utterances were equal to Scripture.

There are nine elements included in *Sola Scriptura*. First, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *inspiration* of Scripture. All Scripture is inspired by God. (2 Timothy 3:16) The word "inspired" means "breathed." All Scripture is the result of the breath of God. Inspiration does not mean that God breathed life into the words of those who penned the Scriptures. The Greek word for "inspiration" is *theopneustos*, which means "God-breathed." Literally this verse says, "All Scripture is God-breathed", meaning that all Scripture was given by the breath of God. Scripture is the written record of what God has breathed. This means that Scripture does not "contain" God's revelation or that it "conceals" God's truth. It does not mean that men wrote divine revelation in their own words. It means that every word of Scripture was breathed out by God. It was not the authors who were inspired but the Scripture that is inspired. Like an ink pen is an instrument in the writer's hand, so holy men of God were the instruments God used to pen the Scripture. God chose each man with their own temperaments, personality, vocabulary, background, and experience to record precisely what He wanted them to write.

Sola Scriptura is essential to our spiritual existence. Jesus said that man is not to live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4) Every word of Scripture originates out of the mouth of God. The Word of God is living and powerful. (Hebrews 4:12) This Book—the Bible—is alive because it is inspired—it has the breath of God in its very words. Jesus said that His words are Spirit and they are life. (John 6:63)

Second, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *infallibility* of Scripture. This speaks of the Scriptures infallibility in its totality. The Bible in its totality will not lead you astray. You can trust that its message and principles will lead you to salvation and eternal blessing. It means that all that is

recorded in Scripture must come to pass. The words of the Lord cannot fail. The word of the Lord endures forever. (Isaiah 40:8) Jesus said that until heaven and earth pass away not a jot or tittle will pass away until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:18) Jesus said that the Scripture cannot be broken. (John 10:35)

Third, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *inerrancy* of Scripture. Whereas infallibility means that the Bible's *message* is without flaw in its totality, inerrancy means that the Bible is without error in any of its *parts*. Because all Scripture is God-breathed it is the Word of God. And because God is holy, God cannot lie. (Titus 1:2) It is impossible for God to lie. (Hebrew 6:18) God is truth and every word of God is truth. Jesus said, "Your Word is truth". (John 17:17) Are there things that God cannot do? God cannot sin. God cannot deny Himself. God cannot lie. Every word of God is tested. (Proverbs 30:5) Therefore let God be true and every man a liar. (Romans 3:5)

Fourth, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *authority* of Scripture. Because the word of God is inspired, inerrant, and infallible, it comes with the authority of God Himself. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. And when God speaks, He speaks with sovereign authority in His word. The Law of the Lord is perfect. (Psalm 19:7) The commands of the Lord are not the "suggestions of the Lord" or the "options of the Lord" or the "considerations of the Lord." It is the "Law of the Lord" and it is binding upon every man's conscience and life. The commandment of the Lord is pure. (Psalm 19:8) Paul understood this when he declared "For this we say to you *by the word of the Lord*". (1 Thessalonians 4:15)

Fifth, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *perspicuity* of Scripture. "Perspicuity" means that the word of God is clear. Jesus said to the Sadducees regarding the resurrection of the dead, "Have you not read?" (Matthew 22:31) Jesus said in another place, "Have you not read?" (Matthew 19:4) Jesus was saying that God had been clear even if they were not. God has so clearly spoken in His word that no one can say that they cannot understand what God is saying. God has spoken with precision and accuracy. Someone has said that the Bible is not hard to understand; it is just hard to swallow. Yes, we need the illumination of the Holy Spirit but any shortcoming in understanding is a problem on our part rather than on the part of the Bible. Rome asserted that the Bible was not clear and could not be understood by the common man in the pew. This is why Rome would not translate the Bible into the common language. The words of Scripture were a threat to its authority and tradition. That is why they outlawed its publication and killed those who did publish it. That is why the worship of the Roman Church is in Latin. Rome told the people what to believe. The Reformers rejected believed that Scripture was so clear that when written in the common language of the people, the plowman in the field could know more about the Bible than the Pope in Rome. They believed that the Bible will interpret itself. Puritan minister Thomas Watson said, "As only a diamond can cut a diamond, so only Scripture can interpret Scripture." The Bible is crystal clear in matters of salvation and godly living.

Sixth, *Sola Scriptura* includes the *sufficiency* of Scripture. The word of God is able to perform all of God's purposes here upon the earth. Isaiah 55:11 affirms that God's word will not return to Him empty without accomplishing what He desires. The word of God is powerful to convict, to convert, to conform, to console, to correct. It is more powerful than any other object we will ever hold in our hand. Peter says that we have been born again not of seed that is perishable but imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Peter 1:23) There is so much life in the Bible that when the Word of God is planted within the soil of a human heart, having been prepared by the Holy Spirit of God, it brings forth eternal life. The Bible has everything needed to make us holy and to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Seventh, *Sola Scriptura* implies the *immutability* of Scripture. Immutability means "unchangeable". Men change. Times change. Cultures change. The Word of God will never change. It is forever the same. God's word is unchanging because God Himself is immutable,

i.e. unchanging. Psalm 119:89 declares, "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:160 declares, "Every one of Your ordinances is everlasting." Because the Word of God never changes, right will always be right and wrong will always be wrong. The way of salvation will forever be the way of salvation.

Eighth, *Sola Scriptura* implies the *invincibility* of Scripture. The Scripture is a superior weapon in the hand of the man or the woman of God as it is wielded and used. Jeremiah 23:29 declares, "My word is like a fire, like a hammer that shatters a rock." The Word of God is called the "sword of the Spirit". (Ephesians 6:17) Hebrews 4:12 declares that the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The word of the living God is an invincible weapon.

Ninth, *Sola Scriptura* implies the *finality* of Scripture. There is no new revelation to be added to the canon of Scripture. The Mormons have three other books of revelation that they regard as Scripture. The Jehovah's Witnesses have their Watch Tower materials as new revelation added to the Bible. As Christians we have the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) God gives a serious warning to any man who tries to add to or take away from Scripture. (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19)

It is time for believers to repent of adopting a negotiable attitude toward Scripture. It is time to return to *Sola Scriptura*. The Church is never stronger than when it is established on the foundation of *Sola Scriptura*. Christians are never stronger than when they build their lives on the foundation of *Sola Scriptura*. The Church is safest when its doctrine and practice is based upon *Sola Scriptura*. Christians are safest when they live their lives according to *Sola Scriptura*.

We need revival more than ever before. But before we can experience true revival we must first have a modern day reformation regarding the Word of God. We must return to *Sola Scriptura*. I call upon the church, its leaders, and its members to accept the Word of God as the absolute standard of truth, to preach and teach it with absolute authority, and to obey it with absolute submission. In the end, God will be true and every man a liar.

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