



Sola Scriptura: Held Captive to the Word of God!

Reformation Sunday, Oct 30, 2022

In the year of our LORD, 1517, a Catholic Monk named Martin Luther, posted his 95 Theses on the door of a Church in Wittenburg Germany. It was essentially a refutation of many Catholic practices that had gone astray of Scripture, including issues surrounding papal authority, corruptions within the priesthood, the selling of indulgences (the means by which temporal punishments for sins can be mitigated), and purgatory (a state of suffering for final purification before heaven).

These thoughts were revolutionary and reformative, and captured the mindset of like-minded men in the 1500's.

In 1521, Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church, called to account, and challenged to recant before the imperial Diet of Worms (an assembly in Worms, Germany) for his thoughts on catholic practices. Luther said this at this assembly:

Yet, as I am a mere man, and not God, I will defend myself after the example of Jesus Christ, who said: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness against me; but if well, why doest thou strike me?" (John 18:23). How much more should I, who am but dust and ashes, and so prone to error, desire that everyone should bring forward what he can against my doctrine. Therefore, most serene emperor, and you illustrious princes, and all, whether high or low, who hear me, I implore you by the mercies of God to prove to me by the writings of the prophets and apostles that I am in error. As soon as I shall be convinced, I will instantly retract all my errors, and will myself be the first to seize my writings and commit them to the flames.

What I have just said will, I think, clearly show that I have well considered and weighed, not only the dangers to which I am exposing myself, but also the parties and dissensions excited in the world by means of my doctrine, of which I was yesterday so gravely admonished. But far from being dismayed by them, I rejoice exceedingly to see the Gospel this day, as of old, a cause of disturbance and disagreement; for such is the character and destiny of God's Word. "I came not to send peace unto the earth, but a sword," said Jesus Christ. "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." (Matthew 10:34-36)

God is wonderful and terrible in His counsels. Let us have a care, lest in our endeavors to arrest discords, we be bound to fight against the holy word of God and bring down upon our heads a frightful deluge of inextricable dangers, present disaster, and everlasting desolations. Let us have a care that the reign of the young and noble prince, the Emperor Charles, on whom, next to God, we build so many hopes, should not only commence, but continue and terminate its course, under the most favorable auspices.

Since your most serene majesty and your highnesses require of me a simple, clear, and direct answer, I will give one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the council, because it is clear that they have fallen into error and even into inconsistency with themselves. If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture, or by cogent reasons, if I am not satisfied by the very text I have cited, and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will

*retract anything; for it cannot be either safe or honest for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.*¹

Some versions of his final statement read:

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other.²

Hallelujah! Such culturally unimaginable courage swept over Europe. R.C. Sproul wrote:

“In a short time, the Reformation swept through Germany but did not stop there. Aided by the translation of the Bible in other nations, the reform spread to the Huguenots in France, to Scotland, England, Switzerland, Hungary, and Holland. Ulrich Zwingli led the Reformation movement in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland, and John Calvin among the French Protestants.”

Frequently the Reformation is described as a movement that revolved around two pivotal issues. The so-called “material” cause was the debate over sola fide (“justification by faith alone”). The “formal” cause was the issue of sola Scriptura, that the Bible and the Bible alone has the authority to bind the conscience of the believer. Church tradition was regarded with respect by the Reformers but not as a normative source of revelation. The “protest” of Protestantism went far beyond the issue of justification by faith alone, challenging many dogmas that emerged in Rome, especially during the Middle Ages.”³

In the many years following, many codify Reformation thinking into the *Five Solas*: *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Solo Christo*, *Soli Deo Gloria*! Today, let us look at and review one of these pivotal issues: **Sola Scriptura**.

Sola Scriptura: The Bible and the Confessions

1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)** *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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*
 - Your bible is literally “God-breathed.” The word in Greek in 2 Tim 3:16 is *theopneustos*. God breathed out, by His Spirit who superintended the Bible authors, each and every Word of the Scriptures. These Words reflect His heart in all matters.
2. **2 Peter 1:20-21 (KJV)** *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*
3. **Hebrews 4:12 (KJV)** *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

¹ <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1900/luthers-speech-at-the-diet-of-worms/>

² <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B140403/a-conscience-captive-to-gods-word>

³ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/the-history-of-the-reformation>

4. **Proverbs 30:5 (KJV)** *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*
5. **Romans 7:12 (KJV)** *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*
6. **Psalms 19:7-11 (KJV)** *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*
7. **James 1:21-24 (KJV)** *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

Confessions:

The Westminster Confession says:

The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word...⁴

The 1689 Second London Baptist Confession is very similar.⁵

Our friends at Church and Family Life declare:

⁴ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/westminster-confession-faith>

⁵ <https://www.the1689confession.com/1689/chapter-1>

We affirm that the biblical doctrine, principles and precepts that God has revealed in His Word for corporate, family, and individual worship and discipleship are sufficient for knowing how to worship God in a manner acceptable to Him and for the effective edification of the saints. (1 Cor. 11:1-12; 14:34; Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 5:22-33; 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4;).

We deny/reject that the church should invent and institute her own principles and methods for corporate worship and discipleship that disregard or replace the explicit teaching of Scripture.⁶

Sola Scriptura: The heart we need!

1 Timothy 4:13 (KJV) *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

Let us (try to!) read Psalms 119!

Sola Scriptura: The Wonderful Implication!

God's Word, rightly divided, always has the answer! Whether it be a direct precept, a principle that requires godly wisdom, or a pattern to follow, Scripture is Sufficient! Remember our message, "Have ye not read?" (Matt 19:1-6)⁷

Common life questions:

- Who am I? → Have ye not read?
- What kind of husband should I be? → Have ye not read?
- How do I parent and disciple my children? → Have ye not read?
- How do I handle my money? → Have ye not read?
- How should we pray? → Have ye not read?
- How should we worship? → Have ye not read?
- What pleases God? → Have ye not read?
- Who is Jesus? → Have ye not read?
- What must I do to be saved? → Have ye not read?

We highly recommend reviewing these messages as well as the footnotes:

<https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/1/revived-relationships-pt-1-embracing-the-sufficiency-of-scripture-in-a-confused-age>

<https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/10/ecclesia-reformata-semper-reformanda>

CRC...

Trust God's Word! Study God's Word! Speak God's Word! Stand on God's Word!

May all our consciences be continually held captive to the Word of God!

Amen!

⁶ <https://churchandfamilylife.com/about/60cd1a3d6d05214482e37bfd>

⁷ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2022/1/jesus-on-family-relationships-and-possession-pt-4-have-ye-not-read>