

Sola scriptura
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

1. Introduction

- a. On October 31st 1517, an Augustinian monk, named Martin Luther, walked up to the large door of the castle church in Wittenberg Germany.
- b. He grabbed some nails and a hammer and nailed a sheet of paper containing 95 theses to the door.
- c. When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the castle church door he had no idea what he was about to unleash.
- d. His 95 theses were 95 complaints against the Roman Catholic churches life and doctrine. Posting stuff like this to the castle church door was normal. It was simply a way of calling for a formal debate among theologians.
- e. So, what happened? Why all the fuss? Why the revolution? These 95 theses were quickly taken down by Luther's students, copied, thanks to the recent invention of the printing press, and distributed throughout Germany and eventually the rest of Europe.
- f. His act of posting the 95 theses started a revolution known now as the Protestant Reformation which forever altered the face of western civilization and therefore the world.
- g. This revolution affected **the arts, politics, economics, education, music, theology, marriage and family, church and state, and a thousand other things.**
- h. But most importantly this revolution transformed the lives of millions of people, giving them hope, purpose, and the assurance of heaven.
- i. What caused such monumental change? In other words, what drove this revolution?
- j. The answer is doctrine, specifically, five doctrines. These doctrines are called the five solas of the reformation and they summarize the teaching of the protestant reformers. At the very heart and soul of these five doctrines is the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- k. What were the five solas? The word sola is the Latin word for alone.
 - i. Sola scriptura (Scripture alone)
 - ii. Sola christos (Christ alone)
 - iii. Sola Fide (Faith alone)
 - iv. Sola gratia (Grace alone)
 - v. Sola deo Gloria (the glory of God alone)
- l. Over the next five weeks we are going to study these five doctrines? Why? This fall marks the 500th anniversary of the protestant reformation. More importantly these five doctrines are life changing. These five doctrines are Christianity 101.

m. Now for this morning's sermon.

n. The gospel was only rediscovered when the scriptures were rediscovered. This morning's topic is sola scriptura (Scripture Alone). Scripture alone is our only authority for all things pertaining to doctrine and Godliness. To help us understand this, we will look at four things...

- i. *The nature of scripture*
- ii. *The authority of scripture*
- iii. *The sufficiency of scripture*
- iv. *The content of scripture*

1. The nature of scripture

a. What is scripture? Scripture is God breathed

b. **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) — 16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

- i. This text tells us that scripture (another name for the Bible) is breathed out by God. In other words, God is the source or author of Scripture. This is called the doctrine of inspiration. The doctrine of inspiration teaches that God, in his providence, oversaw the writing of scripture by using the personalities, life experiences, and training of the authors to get them to write the exact words and phrases he wanted them to write.
- ii. Notice that Paul says that "all scripture is God breathed," not just certain parts.
- iii. The word that Paul uses for scriptures (graphe) was a technical term used 51 times in the NT to refer to the OT and all the NT writers were very aware of this.
- iv. But there are two places in the NT that refer to the writings of the NT as scripture along with the writings of the OT.

1. **2Pe 3:15-16** *"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all **his letters** when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they **do the other Scriptures.**"*

2. **1st Ti 5:18** *"For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."*

3. Here Paul says the scripture says- and then he quotes from Deut. in the OT and the gospel of Luke in the NT. So, he is indirectly saying that the gospel of Luke is considered scripture just like the book of Deut.

- v. The early church agreed that all scripture refers to the 66 books that make up the Bible.
- vi. Every part of the bible is inspired and every word of the bible is inspired. I don't mean inspiring, although it is. I mean god breathed...
- vii. Not only does the Bible teach that all scripture comes from God the bible also teaches us that God cannot lie (Nu. 23:19, Psalm 12:6, Tit. 1:2). Since, scripture is God breathed, and since God can not lie, scripture cannot lie.

- viii. This means that scripture is without error.

c. Objections

- i. The bible is full of errors!!!
- ii. Whenever I hear this objection, I ask, "Can you show them to me?" The skeptic usually can't...
- iii. With that said, I will admit that there are some passages that seem hard to reconcile at first, but when one understands the context, culture, and a little Greek and Hebrew, every apparent Bible discrepancy can be harmonized.
- iv. The bible has been pummeled for 2000 years and it remains standing. In fact, the more we learn about archaeology, science, and the biblical languages the more we can trust the bible.

- v. Here is just one of hundreds of examples...
 1. People used to think that Moses could not have written the first five books of the bible because people could not write back then, but now we know of at least six different written languages from that time period. (Boice, 70)

- vi. At this point, I would love to go into a full orbbed defense of the truthfulness of scripture, but that would turn a 40 minute sermon into a 2 hour sermon.

- vii. If you have questions about the Bible's truthfulness I would love to meet with you for coffee and talk. Grab me afterwards and we can set up a time.

- viii. If scripture is God breathed this has massive implications. This leads us to the next point...

d. First, the nature of scripture.

2. The authority of scripture

a. **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) — 16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

- i. **All scripture (every part and every word) is breathed out by God.**
- ii. This means that what scripture says God says.
- iii. When we read the Bible, we are reading God's very words.
- iv. When we get to know the Bible, we get to know God.
- v. When we disobey the bible, we are disobeying God.
- vi. When we treasure the bible, we Treasure God. Jesus is the word of God incarnate.
- vii. When we neglect the bible, we neglect god.
- viii. When we memorize the bible, we are memorizing God's words.
- ix. When the Bible speaks about a subject God is speaking about a subject.
- x. This means that the Bible has absolute authority on every topic it addresses.
- xi. This means that a Christian does not have the option of ignoring or disobeying the bible.

b. **When the bible speaks, God speaks therefore the Bible is authoritative.**

c. Since nothing else is god breathed (councils, popes, our opinions, John Calvin, Marth Luther, or our favorite authors) nothing else has the same authority as the Bible. This means that when we are discussing issues of doctrine and Godliness God's word has the final say.

d. Do other texts teach the authority of scripture? Yes... let me give three quick examples.

- i. **Matthew 15:1–6 (ESV) — 1** Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, **2** "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." **3** He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? **(See also Mark 7:8-9)**

1. **The Pharisees build their theology on the traditions of men not the words of God alone. Jesus calls them out.... scripture is our only authority.**

- ii. **Acts 17:10–11 (ESV) — 10** The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. **11** Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

- 1. **Test what is taught with the scriptures not the traditions of men or any other source. Scripture is our only authority.**

- iii. **1 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) — 6** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

- 1. **Paul says, don't go beyond what is written. Written where? Written in the scriptures. Scripture is our only authority.**

e. **Scripture alone is our authority.**

- i. Jesus and Paul frequently found themselves in debates in the NT. Have you ever noticed that in those debates they never once appeal to the traditions of men or any other source besides the Bible?
- ii. We are not opposed to tradition. We have great respect for the early church counsels, creeds, and the great confessions of the 16th and 17th century. But these are not our final authority.
- iii. Scripture alone is our final authority for matters of doctrine and godliness. It is the norming norm.

f. Let's make some application!

g. How was the authority of scripture applied in the time of the reformers?

- i. In the 16th century the Roman Catholic taught, and still teaches, that the teaching magisterium of the church composed of church tradition and the teaching of the bishops and the apostles is the final authority for matters of doctrine and Godliness.
- ii. When the reformers debated the catholic church on the issue of justification the reformers quoted scripture and the Church quoted tradition.
- iii. This was the issue... the issue of justification was a secondary issue in one sense because it forced both sides to wrestle with a more foundational issue, what is our authority in these matters?
- iv. In July of 1519 while Luther was debating John Eck at Leipzig he said,
- v. "A simple layman armed with scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it. As for the pope's decretal on indulgences I say that neither the church nor the pope can establish this article of faith.

These must come from scripture. For the sake of Scripture, we should reject pope and councils.” (Bainton, 117)

- h. BTW... every corruption of Biblical Christianity gets sola scriptura wrong.
 - i. For the Christian Scientist, it is the bible plus Mary Baker Eddy’s keys
 - ii. For the Mormons, it is the bible plus the book of Mormon and other sacred writings.
 - iii. For the Jehovah’s Witnesses, it is the bible plus the watchtower society
 - iv. For the seventh day Adventists, it is the Bible plus the revelations of Ellen White.
 - v. For the Roman Catholic Church, it is the bible plus the teaching magisterium of the church.
 - vi. For the Greek Orthodox church, it is the bible plus the first seven ecumenical creeds.

- i. Before we are too critical of the roman catholic church we must look in the mirror.
 - i. Tradition was the ultimate authority for the 16th century church but the individual is the ultimate authority for the modern evangelical. We both get it wrong.

 - ii. Babylon bee (sola feelings)
 - 1. “Progressive Evangelicals meet to affirm the Doctrine of Sola Feels”
 - 2. “PORTLAND, OR—An influential group of the nation’s top progressive evangelical authors, speakers, and bloggers met Wednesday evening to officially affirm their recently drafted doctrine of “Sola Feels,” sources confirmed. The new doctrine, translated “By Feels Alone,” formally outlines one of the essentials of modern-day progressive evangelicalism—that one’s feelings are the supreme authority in all matters of theology and practice.”

 - 3. “Quite simply, ‘Sola Feels’ means that all spiritual truths only become true once they’re filtered through and accepted by our feels—all the feels,” popular author and speaker Jane Hansen told reporters after the meeting. “Thus, things that make us feel bad, those are wrong. The things that give us all the happy feels, those are true, right, and good.”

 - 4. “At least, that’s how we feel at the moment, I feel,” she noted.

- iii. "In his best-selling *Habits of the heart*, Robert Bellah and fellow sociologists surveyed religion in the United States. They concluded that it is best describes as "Sheliaism," named after one person they interviewed who said that she follows her own little voice. Every American is the founder of his or her own religion, following the dictates of his or her own heart." (Horton, 30)
- iv. This leads to "that is not what that text means to me" theology. When reading the Bible, I'm the final authority, never mind authorial intent, context, and the grammatical historical rules of bible interpretation and 2000 years of church history. My feelings determine dictate how I will determine this text.
- v. Sometimes interpretations are flat out wrong.
- vi. Yes, we must read and study scriptures on our own but our very recent postmodern fixation with the individual's absolute authority needs to be challenged.
- vii. The roman church places final authority in the church and the modern evangelical places final authority with the autonomous individual. Both are wrong.
- viii. The bible needs to adjust us from time to time. If not we are merely worshipping an image of ourselves.
- j. *Many evangelicals believe the bible is god breathed and authoritative but there is still a problem. This brings us to our third point...*
 - i. *The nature of scripture*
 - ii. *The authority of scripture*

3. The sufficiency of scripture

- a. **What is scripture sufficient for? It is sufficient for equipping us for every good work.**
- b. **2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) — 16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
 - i. Because the bible is god breathed is has power or to equip us for every good work. Listen to what the text says...
 - ii. Since the bible is god breathed it...
 - iii. is profitable for teaching us (16)
 - iv. is profitable for reproofing and correcting us (16)
 - v. is profitable for training us in righteousness (16)
 - vi. Why does the Bible do all these things?

vii. So that we will be complete, lacking nothing, equipped for every good work. (17)

c. Follow the logic of the passage.

- i. Scripture is breathed out by God.
- ii. Since scripture is breathed out by God... it has the power to equip us for every good work.
- iii. Since, it equips us for every good work it is all we need.
- iv. Scripture alone is totally sufficient for this task since scripture alone is god breathed.

- v. Summarizing this text, one scholar writes,
 1. "The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are sufficient to equip the people of god 'for every good work'. Not just some good works. Not just most good works. No, the bible equips us for every situation. The bible is complete, unique, and sufficient." (Johnson, 37)

d. Application for us...

- i. The modern evangelical has a sufficiency problem... most of us believe that the bible is authoritative but not sufficient.

- ii. I call this bible plus... what we really need is the bible plus something else!

1. The bible is helpful for evangelism but what we really need is the latest marketing techniques and sociological data.
2. The bible is helpful for attracting non-Christians but what we really need is a loud band, young attractive people on the stage, a dark room, maybe some smoke, and a pastor who wears skinny jeans and has a cool haircut.
3. The bible is helpful for some counseling situations but when things get really tough what we really need is trained psychiatrist. I don't want to diminish the work of psychiatrists but if the problem is rooted in sin the bible is sufficient.
4. This bible is helpful for growth in godliness but if we really want to kick an addiction what we really need is the latest 12 step program.
5. The bible is helpful for bringing about societal change but what we really need are the right political leaders.

iii. Let's go back to our passage-

1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV) — 16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- iv. The bible alone is sufficient.
- v. Sufficient for instructing our worship.
- vi. Sufficient for helping us grow in Godliness. (Al Mohler school of counseling)
- vii. Sufficient for guidance.
- viii. Sufficient for the skeptics.
 - 1. If you want to know...
 - 2. What does it mean to be human?
 - 3. What happens when I die?
 - 4. How do I find purpose in meaning in life?
 - 5. How can I be forgiven and forgive?
 - 6. Scripture alone gives us the answers to life's biggest questions...
- e. Where do you turn first?
 - i. When you are struggling in your marriage do you pick up the latest marriage book or read Genesis 1-2, Song of Songs, and Ephesians 5?
 - ii. When you are struggling with money do you reach first for Dave Ramey's latest book or read the book of Proverbs?
 - iii. When you are anxious, depressed or lonely, do you reach first for the latest self-help book, the latest Christian bestseller, or the letters of Paul?
- f. The bible is sufficient to equip us for every good work. But what happens when I fail to produce good works? This brings us to the last point.
- g. First, the nature of scripture*
- h. Second, the authority of scripture*
- i. Third, the sufficiency of scripture*

4. The content of scripture

- a. **What is the content of scripture? Jesus Christ.**
- b. **2 Timothy 3:14–16 (ESV) — 14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** 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. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- c. Paul is writing to Timothy his young disciple. He reminds Timothy that he learned about salvation through Jesus Christ as his grandmother read him the OT scriptures.
- d. The scriptures contain the incredibly good news that we can be saved from the wrath of god, the power of sin, and the power of the devil.

- e. Salvation comes to us because Jesus died in our place, absorbing the wrath we deserve, breaking the power of sin, and defeating the devil.
- f. You can experience Salvation this morning by admitting that you are a sinner and putting all your hope in Jesus.
- g. This is the central message of Scripture. Scripture is not a self-help book, it is a god saves book. Scripture describes a divine rescue mission. Scripture is not good advice it is good news.
- h. When the scriptures were rediscovered in the 16th century the gospel was rediscovered in the 16th century.
- i. When the gospel was rediscovered the world was forever changed.
 - i. Missionaries were sent out.
 - ii. Hospitals and schools were built.
 - iii. The poor were fed.
 - iv. Women were liberated.
 - v. Slaves were freed.
 - vi. churches were planted
 - vii. Schools were founded
 - viii. Commentaries were written
 - ix. kings and Queens were transformed
 - x. Prisons were reformed
 - xi. Congregational singing began
 - xii. communion was served in both kinds (bread and wine),
 - xiii. All callings were deemed sacred
 - xiv. Orphans were adopted
 - xv. All life was seen as sacred.
 - xvi. And this is just the beginning.
- j. The reformation of the 16th century was not ultimately about the power of great personalities like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, or Knox. The reformation was the story of the rediscovery of the scriptures which led to the rediscovery of the gospel. When the gospel was rediscovered everything changed. The word did it all. There is great power in the word.
- k. Luther quote...
 - i. "Take me, for example. I opposed indulgences and all papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip of Amsdorf the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing: the Word did it all... I did nothing: I left it to the Word."
(Luther's Works)
- l. In the 16th century the rediscovery of the scriptures changed the world. The scriptures and their essential message brought down empires and restored

the broken hearted. The scriptures and their central message can change your life this morning. Lets pray...