



THE SOLAS

Week 1 - Sola Scriptura

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

MALDIVES

There is no institutional church here. Those who follow Jesus can only celebrate Him in the privacy of their homes or in their hearts. Pray for all followers of Jesus, that they will still be able to come together and encourage one another in the Lord.

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Daniel Garcia and Emmaus Church San Bernadino.

Closing prayer

If someone asked you, “What’s the most important verse in the Bible, where would you turn?”

Now, I know the temptation is to say, “Well, everything in the Bible is important,” but the Bible itself tells us that not everything is equally important. Some things in the Bible are more important than others. The question, “What’s the most important verse in the Bible,” is really another way of asking, “What’s the main idea of the Bible?”

The Apostle Paul actually answers this question when he writes:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:

So, he’s giving a ranking as to what’s most important and this is of first importance, which is...

that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive,

though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

This is the primary message of the Bible — the gospel, that Jesus did all that He did, lived, died, and rose again, in accordance with the Scriptures.

This primary message is so important that in another letter Paul writes:

Galatians 1:8-9

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. **9** As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Paul says that any other gospel besides the one he and the other Apostles preach is a false gospel. Any other gospel, besides the gospel we find in this book, is a lie.

But it goes further than that. Any other gospel, besides the gospel that we can find even in this very letter to the Galatians, is a lie — no matter who it is coming from, including the highest church authority in the world.

That's what started the Reformation.

We're going to spend the next five weeks looking at the themes of the Reformation, which is just another way of focusing on the gospel itself, because all the themes of the Reformation spring from the gospel.

We're going to start with the cry of Sola Scriptura. Sola is just a Latin word that means alone. So, Sola Scriptura means Scripture Alone.

The Reformation began because of this question — where does the authority of the gospel come from?

To a wider audience, we might ask, "Where does the authority to believe anything come from?"

If you believe a woman has a right to abort her baby, on what authority do you believe that?

If you believe marriage can be redefined as between one man and multiple women, on what authority do you based that belief?

If you believe people should be treated equally, on what authority do you believe that?

All beliefs, not just religious ones, but all beliefs are a question of authority. And the lamest authority you can appeal to is human authority.

- **My College Mentality B.C.**
- **Human authority is the lamest authority you can claim.**
- **Divine authority is the only authority to consider, but how can you tell?**

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

This phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" shows us where Christianity draws its authority from — Scriptures that not only claim to be divinely inspired, but back up that claim with verifiable prophetic utterances. Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures that were written of His very life,

death and resurrection hundreds of years before He was even born.

Every human being has the ability to investigate these claims and this responsibility leaves all of us without excuse.

Authority was the issue of the Great Reformation.

- The 95 Theses was really posted as an inside debate among scholastic peers.
- Printing press, Michelle Angelo, Erasmus had prepared a text of the New Testament in Greek, the writings of Augustine were more widely available, etc.
- Luther's ideas had their own power and their own merit because they didn't originate with Luther.

In 1518, Luther was summoned to Augsburg, Germany, to defend his ideas before an imperial diet (assembly). There was a debate that lasted three days between him and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan.

Cajetan, who is now Saint Cajetan according to the Catholic Church, responded that Scripture must be interpreted by the pope

who is above not only councils but Scripture itself. Luther's response to this was, "His Holiness abuses Scripture. I deny that he is above Scripture." What happened during this debate is that the more Cajetan claimed papal authority, the more Luther claimed biblical authority.

This became the central issue of the Reformation: Who has final authority, God's Word or the pope or a council?

Some would argue, as Cajetan did, that Scripture received its authority from the pope or the church itself. Of course, Luther argued against this in the strongest possible language, maintaining that their own records will show that popes, church fathers, and church councils all erred in the past. Luther said not only is Scripture our only infallible authority, but "a simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it."

"What if they (the church Fathers) erred in their interpretation, as well as in their life and writings? In that way you make gods of all that is human in us, and of men themselves;

and the word of men you make equal to the Word of God ... The saints could err in their writings and the sin in their lives, but the Scriptures cannot err.” (Luther)

That became the central issue — where does the authority of the gospel reside? It’s the most important question we can ask because if you listen to the wrong authority, you receive a false gospel.

That was Luther’s concern. The Reformation is really built upon a pastoral concern. He believed that the practices of the Roman Catholic Church at that time were leading people to damnation rather than to salvation. He believed the church was giving people false hope with the practice of selling indulgences.

The question of authority is tied to the question, “Who defines the gospel?”

Galatians 1:11-12

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. **12** For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Scripture only points to two places for authority that defines truth — itself and Jesus who taught this gospel to those who wrote it down.

But this is not an authority that asks anyone to believe blindly. It’s not a believe just because I say so faith.

When the Apostle Paul summarized the gospel in just a few verses in 1 Corinthians 15, he used this important little phrase “in accordance with the Scriptures.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

That’s the crux of the matter — all that happened to Christ happened according to the Word of God foretelling it.

Now, in other letters, Paul gives a more detailed explanation of the gospel, such as the letter to the Galatians and the book of Romans, but the gospel he preached is in

those letters. This gospel that he received and simply preached.

Whenever the church moves away from the Word it moves away from the gospel. And whenever the church moves away from the gospel, the church becomes lost. That's what happened before the Reformation, the church became lost.

Luther and the other reformers drove us back to the authority of Scripture alone. Now, let me clarify a couple things about Sola Scriptura or Scripture Alone.

“Luther and the Reformers did not mean by sola Scriptura that the Bible is the only authority in the church. Rather, they meant that the Bible is the only infallible authority in the church.” (Sproul)

- Tradition, experience, teachers, parents, government, etc.

Scripture has the final authority over and above every other means of knowing.

We find the ideas of infallible and inerrant and inspired all rolled up into the idea of Sola

Scriptura. If the Bible is authoritative, it derives its authority from God. If it derives its authority from God, then it is inspired. And if God gives the Bible absolute authority, then it has to be infallible and inerrant authority. Infallible means that it does not fail. Inerrant means that what it says is utterly true and without error. Inspired means it comes with God's authority.

If the Bible is God speaking and if God is a God of truth, then His Word is true and trustworthy in everything we find in it.

It has been put his way, “Sola scriptura acknowledges that there are other important authorities for the Christian, authorities that should be listened to and followed. Nonetheless, Scripture alone is our final authority. It is the authority that rules over and governs all other authorities. It is the authority that has the final say.”

But regarding the gospel, how human beings must rightly relate to their Creator, there is only one trustworthy authority for such a relationship — the Word of God.

Galatians 1:8-9

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. **9** As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

What is an opposite gospel?

That's what the five Solas unpack, beginning with grace alone. But we do not have the authority to claim by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone unless Scripture alone has final authority.

What we find in the Scriptures is a God who initiates, plans and fulfills all that is needed for the salvation of a human being. This is why it is a gospel received by us and not a gospel earned by us. The gospel was performed by Christ. It is only received by us based upon His performance.

The nature of the gospel is exclusivity. This Book is the single authority above all other contenders to the throne by which you can find and know the God of the universe. And the message is utterly unique when

compared to every other religion — you are not saved on the basis of anything you have done or can do.

Ephesians 2:1

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

You are the walking dead. Where do you go to find how to be brought back to life? Most of us assume that it's in something we do that brings us back to life, when the message of the gospel is that it's in hearing about something someone else has done that brings us back to life. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. When you hear with faith, suddenly, you find yourself alive. The God in theory is now God in reality to you.

The mission of the church is not to decide truth, but to accurately teach the truth of the gospel.

The cross “was the most momentous hour since the beginning of the world, it is indeed the turning point which determines everything — it is the greatest event, the most climatic

event that has ever taken place in this world. Everything leads up to that hour, everything eventuates from that hour. That is the hour to which the whole of prophecy is looking forward, and to which the whole of the church and her doctrine and history look back. It is the central, focal, point which determines and controls everything.” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

— the cross of the gospel.

And it’s a message that reaches across race barriers and educational barriers and international barriers and political barriers and every other barrier you can think of. It brings both the powerful and the powerless to their knees in unity behind the claim — Christ alone is Lord.

Do you want harmony in your family? When Christ is the authority in your home, you’ll have harmony.

Do you want harmony in your marriage? Where is the authority in your marriage? Christ has placed His authority in this Book.

Now, once you believe — the same words that brought you life can bring others life. You have the words to life.

John 6:68

68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,