

The Reformation in Biblical Perspective  
“Sola Scriptura”  
II Timothy 3:14–16  
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Let's start by look at II Timothy 3:14–17 which says [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, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Now II Timothy 4:2a says [2a] *preach the word.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

His name was William Tyndale who was a colleague and a sense of a reformer alongside of Martin Luther. He took great pleasure, encouragement, instruction and inspiration from Luther but perhaps he was most indebted for his calling ministry and grasp for the reformation truths of reclaiming the saving Gospel in Christ from the vitality of the church, to what I call a pre-reformer, John Wycliffe. Wycliffe not only committed his life to theological investigation under the threat of the church but he also wanted to get the Bible translated into the common language of the people, in which we have a ministry in our day and time called Wycliffe Bible Translators which followed that calling that Wycliffe had.

Wycliffe died and then the church decided to give a directive to burn everything he ever wrote even to the point to exhume his body, burn his bone and scatter the ashes. Things still had gotten copied and it had gotten around to Tyndale almost 200 years later. As Tyndale read them he began to have a burden that God's Word would be in the language and available to everyone. The printing press became quite his instrument and he ministered in England. Soon Henry the VIII began to track him down in order to take his life. So he went to Europe where he had to travel around not only to escape Henry the VIII but also Charles the V. He benefited from the Reformers, Zwingli, Luther and Calvin but it all came against him as he was finally arrested, strangled to unconsciousness to the verge of death as he was tied to the stake. Then the stake was set on fire and he was burned to death.

We are deeply grateful to John Fox who was able to write Tyndale's very last words and I believe they are extremely informative. He had already called upon Christ and preached Christ. What do you think his last words would be that is particularly in line with his calling of God's Word? He loved the statement of John Wycliffe that the Word of God contained the essential center of substance of Christianity. I will share with you his last words as we get to the end of this study.

What is the flashpoint of the Reformation? There were many issues in the Reformation, one being Communion. Lady Jane Grey's defense of Communion cost her, her head and that was a very big issue. Other issues were the church, the preaching ministry, the place of preaching, the number of sacraments, rescuing the church from corruption, superstition, ritualism and the selling of indulgences which would play upon the emotions of people when they would hear "*As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul out of purgatory springs.*" That motivated Luther to go to the church in Wittenburg to nail the 95 Theses and sent the Reformation into all

the villages and towns of Germany, Switzerland, France and England beginning in 1517 and kept moving all the way to the 1560s, costing the lives of thousands of martyrs and Reformers who were true to the faith even under the most ghastly deaths.

The flashpoint of the issue was how a man, male or female, could be right with God. This statement is given to us and repeated in the book of Job. How can man be right with God? Why is that such a penetrating question? It is because we need to be right with God because everything is wrong with us. We're dead in our sins. We can't be right on our own initiative. We can't be right in our manmade religions because our manmade religions come from our depravity. Praise God there was the recapturing of the Apostolic message of the Gospel and at the same time the recapturing of the Apostolic vitality of His church.

Superstition was dismissed. Corruption began to be rooted out in the leadership of the church and all of that on the heels of what the Gospel was doing. This always happens when you get into a battle and there is usually that framing issue – what is the Gospel, how can a man be right with God – but in the battle you begin to get to the root of the issue. How do you know how to be right with God, to the point that you are willing to die for this message? This became predominately clear at the moment Luther said at the Imperial Diet of Worms;

“Since your most serene majesty and your lordships require of me a simple, clear and direct answer, I will give one, and it is this: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures and by clear reason (for I do not trust in the pope or councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

Luther praises God for sola fide (saved by faith alone), for sola gratia (saved by grace alone through faith alone), for sola Christus (saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone) and for the only thing that made sense in this world. It's not man's personal, carnal happiness but the glory of God. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone to the supremacy of the glory of God and our joy in Him forever.

The foundational issue of the Scripture being our only rule of faith and practice and our ability, being made in the image of God to reason is not what we do to get to the Scripture but what we do from the Scripture and this what the issue in question. We are not saved by acknowledging the Scripture through illumination and Christ but we are saved through Christ by Divine revelation from which we reason to Christ. We are people of The Book and The Book is truth. Jesus says in John 17:17, *[17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* We are people who have been brought from sin's dominion to Christ by the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God always works with the Word of God.

You need an open heart, open eyes and an open mind but just like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, no preacher has the ability to open your mind, heart and eyes but we can open the Scriptures and that's what Jesus used to open the mind, heart and eyes of the disciples He talked with on the road. You can have the Word of God and not have the Spirit of God but you can't have the work of the Spirit of God without the Word of God. Jesus says in John 6:63 says *[63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

We can pray for the Spirit, surrender to the Spirit and seek to walk in the Spirit but we cannot direct the Spirit. God sovereignly moves in His Spirit and He moves with His Word so Spirit of God let me be in Your Word, proclaim Your Word and let Your Word be in me. This is

what the Spirit of God will use me. This is why Paul, while under a death sentence and writing his last epistle of 13, turns to his most trusted, the man who he is putting his mantle on and says to Timothy in II Timothy 3:14–15 which says [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.*

So this Bible that gives you the Gospel message and the whole counsel of God as to how to love Him with all of your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself, are you firmly convinced? Here I stand. It may cost me my job or stature in the neighborhood or in the civic society. I have learned from it how to be right with God. Not only do I stand here but I don't stand still here. Notice that Paul doesn't tell Timothy to be firmly convinced of him for that's not where Timothy's confidence is but his confidence and faith is in the Christ that is revealed in the Word of God. There is where your faith rests and the solid rock upon which you build. This is where you continue to build.

God used people in Timothy's life – his mother, grandmother, Paul. God will continue to use people and preachers in your life. He will make Timothy a preacher in this as well. You can't get this Gospel without the Bible. You get wisdom from the Bible not from the philosophies of this age or technology. You get the wisdom for salvation from the Word that you have learned and in which you continue to learn from.

Then Paul tells Timothy that all Scripture is God breathed. Paul wants Timothy to understand the Bible so first he gives him the origin of the Bible. Peter was faced with a similar thing and in II Peter 1:21 he says [21] *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit.* Peter took a noun and made it a verb for 'carried along' comes from the word 'ferry' in which this would say the Holy Spirit 'ferry-ed' men along to the truth.

In II Timothy 3:16–17 it says [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.* This concept is all over the Bible but it's the only time you see that a word is created from two words – *theopneustos*, which means God breathed or breath of God. All Scripture is God breathed – wind, Spirit.

This takes me back to my childhood when I would go outside on a cold, winter night and you breathe. The next words out of my mouth were 'Mommy, look, I can see my breath.' That was the way to say 'winter has come' and it was so exciting. Now, 'look, you can see His breath,' are you excited or do you just kind of fit it in when you can or when it's convenient? This is God speaking. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Duet. 8:3, Matt. 4:4). Here is His Word and it has come from Him. It commands my affection, my attendance and my allegiance. In it and by it alone can I infallibly and inerrantly know Him.

Paul also tells Timothy that everything in this Word is profitable. When I read books I tend to have six going at one time and they are all in different categories. One is my fun reading in history and biographies. One of the books I'm currently reading is titled Three Roads to the Alamo by William C. Davis. It is a well written book but there are things I just started skipping through but when it comes to the Bible there is nothing I ought to skip through and that includes the genealogies. All Scripture is profitable. Now some is more profitable than others where some are of first importance and some are of second importance but everything is profitable in the Bible.

So Paul goes from the origin of the Bible, to the nature of the Bible and then he gives Timothy the design of the Bible. What is it profitable for? It is profitable for teaching. Don't think that you don't want doctrine and just life because you can't have life for Christ without doctrine. You can have doctrine and not have life but you can't have life without doctrine. The Bible was meant to be taught and when the doctrine comes to me then now it's time to live it. The burden of every preacher when he is preaching is not that you walk away with another folder in your file cabinet of theological knowledge but that you walk away with how that doctrine changes your life.

Doctrine first reproveth you and the reason it starts off negative is because we don't start off in neutral – we are sinners. So when the Scripture comes we repent. You can't put on until you put off so we reprove and then we get to correction. Now we're ready to put on. Don't try to correct until you reprove. Don't try to obey until you repent so you repent and then embrace in a new life and a new obedience. The result is training in personal righteousness where you start building those spiritual sinews and muscles. This is not the righteousness that saves you for that is the righteousness given to you by Christ and that is perfect. This is the righteousness that you are now giving back to Jesus in lifetime stewardship.

Finally, here is the result. It's that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. The Word is not only inspired, inerrant, and infallible but it is sufficient for all of life in Christ and for Christ. Then Paul tells Timothy to preach that Word. God gave us His Word to be read but He designed His Word to be preached. Do you want to be saved by grace alone through faith alone? Faith comes by hearing which is the preaching of the Word where God has promised that when that Word is preached in the power of the Spirit and in faithfulness, Jesus Himself speaks. I pray that every Saturday night and Sunday morning in preparation for the preaching of His Word.

I pray that God would let them leave with a greater sermon than the one I preached through what Jesus preaches to them from what I preach. I pray that you can get a much better sermon than I can give you every Sunday and that Christ will speak to your heart by His Spirit and you as His sheep will know His voice and follow Him and that faith will come into your life through the hearing of God. Yes you are to read and hear it preached because you want to learn but Paul now tells Timothy to preach that Word.

In the book of Acts the landscape of Jerusalem is being totally renovated by the work of the Gospel after the ascension of Jesus and the filling of the Spirit. And as they fulfill the Great Commission thousands and thousands are coming to Christ for people are being saved every day. When this happens Satan is going to strike back and the first strike of Satan to stop the Gospel in Jerusalem is to arrest the preachers. Bring the earthly powers to stop this Kingdom power. Then when they released them the authorities tell them 'you cannot preach that Word and His Name.' Satan wants to stop the preaching of the Word yet it's not the exclusive means of grace but it is the primary means of grace. So if you lose that you lose the rest of them. How do Peter and John respond to this? They tell them 'We must obey God rather than man' and they preached the Word to their own peril.

When you get to Acts 6 we see Satan bringing disruption in the church. There is the accusation of racism. The leaders realize they aren't doing a good job with mercy ministry but their problem isn't racism, it's that they don't have time to do it so they get more help through the deacons. They know they are not to neglect the ministry of prayer and the Word. That tells you that they are smart enough not to cause the problem by creating a bigger problem but they

wanted to make prayer and the Word a priority. This also tells us that up until this problem arose the leaders and pastors of the church made prayer and the Word a priority.

What do we do today? Pastors build their schedules about so many things with many of them being good things and then try and accommodate prayer and the Word. We tend to put everything else in and then wonder how we can negotiate prayer and the Word but that's not the way the leaders at the church in Jerusalem did. They put prayer and the Word first and then negotiated how to everything else. No wonder our people today don't prioritize prayer and the Word because it's not prioritized from the pulpit which may be why we're seeing this epidemic of plagiarism in the pulpit where they go and copy someone else's material.

Where does Satan attack today? He attacks seminaries because when he does then he can get to the preacher. If he gets to the preacher then the preacher will go to a pulpit and then Satan gets that church – to distract preachers from prayer and the Word in order that the people don't become people of prayer and the Word. Satan wants to intimidate preachers. Right now we have preacher after preacher who are trying to find a way to say they are faithful to the Word of God without actually preaching what is faithful to the Word of God but preaching what the culture wants them to preach.

I realize we have to preach in terms of what the culture understands but we don't preach on the terms of what the culture demands. Our people will not be courageous if our pastors and preachers are not courageous. So with this in mind I want to conclude by giving you two takeaways and I'm speaking to you as a pastor because I love you.

Takeaway number one is that you have to get the Word in your life personally. Get to the Word, in the Word and get the Word in you through reading, meditation, memorization, prayer and prioritize the preaching of the Word where you get in your life so that you get it in your marriage and family. It's not technique for technique is not what will make your marriage something you can enjoy the rest of your life for it is the glorious work of the God. Get the Word in you personally, in your marriage and in your family. Then make the Word be the foundational block of your parenting. Get your children in the Word and then getting the Word in your children and getting your family to sit under the Word together. I am pleading with you to do this.

You can't know Christ or walk with Him triumphantly in this broken world unless you get into the Word and the Word gets in you as you surrender to the Spirit of God. I beg you not to fit in the Word of God when it's convenient. Make sure you are in the Word of God. Do you remember the appetite you had for the Word of God when you were first converted? Long for the pure milk of the Word of God. Hunger for the Word of the Living God. I know there will be times you don't.

I'd like to use the analysis of hunger. There are times you don't hunger for a meal like when you get sick. I believe mothers are God's gift to remind you of the work of the Holy Spirit. When I told my mom I wasn't hungry because I didn't feel well, she would say 'son you need to eat something' and I knew that settled the day for I would be eating something. I know you get discouraged, disappointed and are depressed at times and that will quench your hunger but it's right then you hear the Holy Spirit say to you, 'You need to eat something, eat the Word of God. Sit and chew it, meditate on it and swallow it.'

Another time we don't like to eat is when we get too busy. I can't tell you how many times I would hear my mom tell me when I didn't eat, 'breakfast is the most important meal of the day.' She would also tell me 'Son, I don't care how busy you are, you are not too busy to eat, now go get something to eat, you need to eat something.' If I may be the voice of the Holy

Spirit to you at this moment. Go to the Word of God to find out what's important and you might be less busy. Secondly you need to eat something. You need to be in the Word of God, that Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

In 1999 I came to Briarwood Presbyterian Church and one Sunday night we had a time to celebrate the ministry of Frank and Barbara Barker and what God had done through them here at Briarwood. We have still had the opportunity also to celebrate their ministry for the past 20 years of what they have continued to do here. When I came the elders asked Frank to put the mantel on me the way Paul did for Timothy and Elijah did for Elisha. Frank said in this meeting, 'What's the mantel?' and the elders said to Frank, 'We don't know so you figure that out.' During a Sunday evening sermon, Frank gave a short sermon and then asked me to come up to present me with the mantel. The mantel is in my office today. The mantel is an open Bible and then Frank said to me 'Preach the Word.'

It wasn't long after that where I heard from one of the members of the church who worked on the construction of the sanctuary here at Briarwood who told me what had been done in the construction of the pulpit. He told me that the platform the pulpit is built upon is a concrete platform that was poured before the wood that was laid upon on it to set the pulpit on and that he had come early that morning they had planned to pour the platform and put a Bible there which lays directly below the pulpit so that every time someone preaches from this pulpit they are standing on the Word. I beg you to be men and women of The Book. Be in the Word of God. This is what I'm asking of you and now I'd like you to do something for me.

We are in a tsunami of a secularist movement where moral relativism is sweeping over this nation. It is being promoted in academia, the media, our government, the corporate world and everywhere you see. Part of its goal is to get rid of the family, the church and the message that families and churches hold to because that is an adversary to them. I can't believe how rapidly this is moving. I do a ten minute podcast daily where I'm constantly handling the issues of the day so I know how fast this is moving and that's why I call this a tsunami.

I thought of the tsunami in Japan that happened March 11, 2011. I saw the photographs and almost everything was destroyed except a few buildings. I found out that the buildings that stood didn't stand because they had a better superstructure but it was because they had a deep, solid foundation. When this secular humanist tsunami in our nation ebbs and it will ebb, you can only live in a culture of death so long. You can only disregard the sanctity of life so long. You can only eradicate the family and disregard the sacredness of the family for so long. You can only embrace sexual anarchy and sexual immorality as a way of life for just so long and everything gets destroyed.

When that tsunami ebbs away, will the church be standing? My answer to that question is 'yes, but not every church.' Only those churches that are built upon the foundation of the Word of God will be left standing, not those who nuance their message or those who get tolerated and found out that was the avenue to being eradicated or those who compromised and accommodated. These churches think they are purchasing their existence but they are actually selling themselves into oblivion. The ones who will be left standing are the ones who by the Spirit of God remain faithful to the Word of God, to the glory of God and the preeminence of the Son of God. They probably won't be as big as they were but they will be left standing.

So the second takeaway is I ask you to pray for me. The churches that will be left standing in the Word of God are churches that remain faithful to the Word of God. So please pray for this pulpit and pray for me as the pastor until the Lord sends me home. Also pray for the next one. So that when the landscape is destroyed Christ's church will be standing right here,

on mission, on message and in ministry rooted in the foundation of the Word of God. So whatever price has to be paid to remain faithful to the Word of God from the pulpit so the church will remain faithful to the Word of God, I ask that you pray for that so that all of those who would rise up against the Word of God might yet have their eyes opened.

The churches that will stand in the storm are those rooted in the Prophets and Apostles with Christ Jesus as the Cornerstone and everything else is sand that will be wiped away. Please pray for this because that Word above all earthly powers will stand. In the words of that great hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*;

*Let goods and kindred go,*

*This mortal life also;*

*The body they may kill:*

*God's truth abideth still,*

*His Kingdom is forever.*

So what did Tyndall pray as he was tied to the stake and before his life was taken? He prayed 'Oh Lord as I die please open the eyes of the King of England.' He was talking about King Henry the VIII and less than four years later over a series of two years ordered four different Bibles to be published at the expense of the government and sent to all the common people. The King used the research of the man he pursued to death, William Tyndall, to get that Word out. Our God reigns and that Word stands above all earthly powers, here I stand. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I ask that the Holy Spirit will speak to your hearts. You have allowed me to speak, now Spirit, who spoke through Your Word, now speak to their hearts, how they personally in their marriage, their calling and their families will be men and women of the Word – reading, receiving, meditating, memorizing, and hearing it. I pray they would pray for and encourage the faithfulness of the Word from the pulpit, to every small group and every congregation community so that here we stand and when Satan has done his works, Christ will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Oh amazing Grace, Amen.