

Sola Scriptura – Our Authority for Evangelism

(Our Directive and Guide to Evangelism)

Psalms 19:1-11 / 2 Timothy 3:13-17

It was Five hundred and two years ago that Martin Luther nailed his 95 Thesis to the Wittenberg Church door. As we are considering Sola Scriptura in the light of evangelism one cannot help but to think of Martin Luther and his emphasis upon Sola Scriptura when he wrote “I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. The Word did it all.” Calvin after noting that although creation clearly reveals that God is yet he quickly points out that at the same time it does not provide for us the instruction necessary unto salvation, he writes “Not in vain, therefore, has He (*that is God*) added the light of His Word in order that He might make Himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom He was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to Himself.” And in another place he wrote, “I beseech believers, as they know that the true standard of righteousness must be derived from **Scripture alone**.” And Calvin also writes “For anyone to arrive at God the Creator he needs Scripture as his Guide and Teacher.” And then we have the direct instruction from the Apostle Paul when he instructed the younger evangelist Timothy to simply “**Preach the word!** *Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*” (2 Tim. 4:2) Thus this evening I want to not only share why Sola Scriptura is the only authority for evangelism but also why I believe it to be the basic sola of the Reformation.

A. What is Scripture?

1. Scripture is God Himself speaking to us in His written word

- a. Scripture is not of human origin - 2 Peter 1:20-21 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy **never came by the will of man**, but holy men of God spoke **as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**.*

- (1) “Knowing this **first**”, Peter points out that knowing the source of Scripture is to be upper most in our understanding
- (2) Concerning this passage Calvin writes “For you wilt never come well prepared to read it, except you bring reverence, obedience, and docility; but a just reverence then only exists when we are convinced that God speaks to us, and not mortal men.
- (3) Note carefully we will read with a just reverence when we fully understand that it is God not man who is speaking to us in Holy Scripture

- b. The Holy Spirit through Peter clearly reveals to us that Scripture **never came** as a result of man’s personal thoughts, opinions or by the will of man

- (1) The writers of Holy Scripture only wrote what was given them by the Holy Spirit
- (2) Men penned it but God alone is the author of our Scriptures
- (3) I say “our Scriptures” for God has given them to us, they belong to us, that they might give us understanding of who God is and what our duty is toward God

Deut 29:29 *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed **belong to us and to our children forever**, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

- (4) No wonder the Psalmist tells us they are *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* (Ps 19:10)

2. And this is why “sola Scriptura” Scripture alone is what we must require in the pulpits of the church of Jesus Christ and in the evangelical efforts of the church

- (1) Faithful evangelism is not telling the unsaved world what we think or believe
- (2) It is not telling the world what our church believes but what God proclaims in His written Word

- a. When witnessing it is important that we quote Holy Scripture and that we introduce it with these words, “God says”

Ps 19:7-8 *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

- (1) We need to understand the wording “The law of the Lord” is referring to the written Word of God, it is not to be limited to rules for living, but includes the covenant promises and the whole of God’s teaching concerning Himself and mankind’s relationship to God
- (2) Here we are told that it is of proper use for evangelism in that it is perfect in the converting of the soul
- (3) It alone makes wise the simple
- (4) It alone meets the need of the heart causing it to rejoice
- (5) It alone is perfect, sure, pure and able to enlighten one to what is truth and right

- b. This is in full agreement with what Paul says in Romans regarding the means whereby we come to faith - Rom 10:17 - *So then faith comes by hearing, and **hearing by the word of God**.*

- (1) Faith does not come by the intuitive and innate insightfulness of man's perceptions
- (2) Nor by trickery or clever means to convert the lost

Eph 5:6 *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

- (3) For Scripture never came by the will of man, rather it is indeed, God speaking to us in His written Word

B. The value of Holy Scripture, that is, the value of Scripture Alone in the work evangelism – reaching the lost for Christ

1. The Reformation to a great degree was the recovery of the Bible as the only authority in the church
 - a. At the time of the Reformation Sola Scriptura was dealing with the question of authority
 - b. For a great period of time the church had replaced Scripture with itself as the only authority
 - (1) The Scriptures had become a forbidden book to the laity
 - (2) The Papacy, the church councils and the opinions of men had replace the scripture as the sole authority
 - c. The teaching of Moses had been totally rejected as revealed for us in Deut 29:29 *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."*
 - (1) To us and our children
 - (2) To you and your family
 - d. What a wonderful gift God has given us in Holy Scripture for in Holy Scripture God has revealed Himself sufficiently that we might rightly know Him
 - (1) Revealing to us our sinful nature and need of a Redeemer
 - (2) Revealing to us what He did to redeem us from our sin
 - (3) Making it possible that fallen man may know Him and enjoy Him forever - John 10:10 *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*
2. All Scripture is given to us by direct revelation from God and therefore the only absolute authority and is therefore sufficient for our every need as God's people - 2 Tim. 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
 - a. This is the basis of Scripture being of absolute authority and as such the supreme judge in all controversies and doctrines of the church

WCF Chapter 1 Section 10 The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Acts 17:11 *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (see also 1 John 4:1)*

- (1) All scripture – the whole of Scripture is given to us by inspiration
- (2) All scripture is - *qeo/pneusto\$* / Theopneustos - God breathed, it is God speaking to us

I am going to quote Dr. Sproul for I think he explains it quite well; "what Paul is saying when he insists that all of the Scripture has been breathed out by God, he is saying that its ultimate origin is in Him. It is His word. It is His speech. He is the One who is the source of these writings."

- b. Therefore it is profitable of great value to the church

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine

- (1) It is the only source for what we are to believe and teach

1 Peter 3:15 *Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*

- (2) It would be an error to think that evangelism does not include follow up and discipling the new convert
- (3) Scripture alone is the only means of correcting false teaching
- (4) It is the only means of discipline in the church – not only does it reprove it provides for us the correction of our error
- (5) Using Scripture since it is our only instruction in righteousness – in directing the new believer in his daily walk

- c. And finally *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- (1) Making them fully aware that nothing more is needed for their salvation

- (2) Nothing more is needed to equip them in their walk with God
- d. Giving them the basis of their assurance of salvation
 - (1) For Scripture alone instructs us in our only means of an imputed righteousness which alone fits us for heaven

2 Cor 5:20 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

- (2) Making sure that they are not trusting in their works but in the work of Christ in their behalf

In closing always being aware that Scripture is God Himself speaking to us and to those to whom we may give witness being confident that "sola Scriptura" is a safe and certain authority, directive and guide in evangelism
Being thankful that the Reformation was the recovery of the authority of Scripture Alone in the church
Rejoicing that Scripture Alone is fully sufficient for proclaiming to the unsaved world God's means of salvation

Let us then go forth as God's unworthy earthen vessels proclaiming this so great a salvation to a lost and dying world
With this firm knowledge that God's written word is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey and that it will not return to Him void