

Series: Legalism. License. Liberty!  
Message Title: ***The Final Authority of All Faith and Practice***  
Date: Sunday, October 29, 2017  
Scripture: Galatians 3:8, 22; 4:30  
Speaker: David H. McKinley  
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

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## Introduction

October 31, 1517, marks a moment in history when the world was radically changed because of a fundamental recovery and re-orientation of life based upon the authority of Scripture.

While this event may have been seen first and foremost as a religious debate and an ecclesiastical schism of another era, the recovery and reality of the truth-claims of Scripture transformed lives, institutions and the world.

It was like the uncaging of a lion! In the end, there were five fundamental convictions and foundational affirmations that marked the impact of this moment in history.

Five Foundational Convictions of the Reformation  
*Sola Gratia*—Grace Alone  
*Sola Fide*—Faith Alone

*Sola Christus*—Christ Alone

***Sola Scriptura*—Scripture Alone**

*Soli Deo Gloria*—Glory of God Alone

At the core, *Sola Scriptura* was the formal cause of the Reformation. All other expressions and beliefs flowed forth from this foundational understanding and conviction.

What is *Sola Scriptura*? God’s revelation given in the 66 books of the Bible—beginning with Genesis and ending with the Revelation—is our ultimate, trustworthy and final authority for all faith and practice.



## ***Sola Scriptura* is All About the Authority of the Bible**

This means Scripture stands above all else and therefore, all other authorities—including the church, tradition, human reason and personal opinion—are subject to God’s revelation.

The Bible is an amazing library of books, all forming one book that reflects unity and

continuity of message, and all focusing upon and finding its summit in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I identify as one who affirms and embraces the truth claims of Scripture.

“What we believe about the Bible is the most fundamental issue regarding all of our faith and practice.”

This was at the heart and core of the life of Luther and all of the reformers.

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience, I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me, Amen.” —Martin Luther, Diet of Worms, 1521

Where did Luther get this resolve? . . . this life-risking conviction regarding Scripture? From the pages of Scripture itself!

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’ . . . But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:8, 22 ESV).

“But what does the Scripture say?” (Galatians 4:30a ESV).

Note Paul’s use of the term, *Scripture*. The Greek word, *Graphe*, is *writings*. We get our word, *graph*, from this. It shows the measures and charts—the correlation between things. Also *autograph*—something made or written with one’s own hand, a handwritten signature.

“Paul views the Scriptures as if they were God speaking . . . These verses, along with others, highlight an absolute identification of Scripture with the words of God in the minds of NT writers and are important biblical

support for the historical belief in the total inspiration of the Bible and its authority.”

—James M. Boice

Paul reflected this here in Galatians and also in Second Timothy.

...”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. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:15-16 ESV).

“breathed out” is the very breath of God. The claim of Scripture itself is that God speaks, and where God speaks, He speaks with authority.

This does not mean the Bible is the only place where truth is found, but what we know about God and all we learn about life in this world must be viewed in light of Scripture. It is God’s revelation and thus, establishes truth without any mixture of error for all people and all times. It stands, it abides and it remains as God’s rule in all of life.

When we look at the world, what does the Bible say, and does it match?

- Is there evil? Yes.
- Is there a desire for good? Yes.
- Is there a search for happiness? Yes.
- Is there a hope for salvation? Yes.
- Is there a fear of death? Yes.
- Is there a pursuit of joy? Yes.
- Is there an idea of morality? Yes.
- Is there a desire for loyalty? Yes.
- Is there a passion for helping those in need? Yes.

Everything you read about in Scripture (in context) matches what we know to be true. If it matches what we know to be true, it can be trusted in what is unknowable to us—eternity.

God's voice is not old nor is it faint. It is alive, continual and powerful, and this is our view as a church gathered here today.

One of most exciting projects aimed at honoring and reflecting the durability and reliability of the Bible is the Museum of the Bible, opening soon in Washington D.C.—430,000 sq. ft., three blocks from U.S. Capitol/ and free (like the Smithsonian). The museum

will highlight the primacy and durability of Bible in history. The Warren Life Foundation submitted a gift to the "One Million Names" campaign, and the name of our church will permanently be on display inside the Museum of the Bible.

Why? As church, we believe in every verbal (words), plenary (every part), and inspiration (God breathed activity) of this book. The beauty and authority of the Bible is not in antiquity or cover, it is God's voice. God speaks!

Our world is filled with voices. Digital communication has amassed a limitless volume of voices, and we crave constant communication and contact. Yet much of what we hear today is contradictory. We live in a world of competing truth-claims.

On a daily basis, we hear a wide variety and broad diversity of social sermons regarding truth claims and life choice. The dominant mindset is "If it's right for you, it's true for you" or "It's true for me because I believe it."

Our world is consumed with the declaration of personal autonomy and no source of absolute truth, the same is not applied to mathematics, music or art.

Apart from new “free form” mathematics, the world of business, finance and commerce operates on the absolutes of dollars and cents! You don’t give someone \$20 for a \$2 dollar purchase and get back 85 cents. Why? Because mathematics are absolute—finance, engineering, chemistry, etc. ...Tylenol, Ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.

You can’t listen to music that is not based upon the absolutes of notes, scales and tones: A-B-C-D-E-F-G. There is a frequency of tone within music and that cannot be ignored. Every one of the talent shows has to do with people who can sing on pitch. In keyboard music, middle C is a C—it has a certain pitch.

In art (as free-form as it appears), red is red, blue is blue, and so forth—even in abstracts. While there are multitudes of color palates, everything comes from three primary colors: red, yellow, blue.



Yet when it comes to humanity, sexuality, morality, and spirituality, we are told there is no foundational form, no common core, no absolutes that can or should determine what is right and wrong for us. All truth is open and thus, every invention is equally true.

Today, we believe we can have...

- Morality apart from authority
- Ethics apart from absolutes
- Justice apart from morality
- Sex apart from relationships
- Gender apart from anatomy
- Faith apart from truth
- Freedom apart from responsibility

All of these (and more!) are not only addressed, but defined and directed through the explicit instruction Holy Scripture.

Yet, our bedrock belief and conviction in the authority of Scripture does not lead us to insensitivity toward the reality of human beings trapped in the bondage and darkness of sin. To the contrary, it is this authority in which we are sent to rescue people from the helplessness and hopelessness of life without God.

While authority has to do with the character of the Bible, belief in this authority brings about authenticity in the life of the Christian, and a heart of urgency and compassion for those living without the light and truth of the gospel.

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints... But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt” (Jude 3, 20-22).

The world doesn't need to simply hear our defense of the Bible, but the declaration and demonstration of the gospel—Jesus.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (John 14:6 ESV).

This is why *Sola Scriptura* is the heart of the Reformation in the 16th century and at the

heart of needed reformation for us today. Everything rises and falls on the authenticity, integrity, infallibility and authority of Scripture.

## ***Sola Scriptura* Points to the Life-Giving Quality of the Bible**

Because Scripture is God's Word, it is not ancient; it is alive! God is not dead and His Word is not dated.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV).

Note the imagery—a sword to give life or to bring death. We mostly use swords today for décor, but the purpose of the sword was for survival.

We may not be too familiar with swords, but we understand guns. They are as valuable

a means of protection as they are in lethal capacity. God's Word is valuable and vital in its ability to lead, guide, direct and protect us; even as it is lethal if we disrespect and disregard it.

"You may read other books, but this book reads you."

The Bible is relevant and reliable. It gives wisdom, rule of judgment, morality, security and confidence.

It is by the Book you can see and survive in this world. This book, the Bible, lives and all who come to God through the Scriptures find life in the name of Jesus.

"When the Scriptures speak, God Speaks."  
—Martin Luther

Not just preaching, but practice and confidence in life.

*A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing:*

For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,  
No thanks to them, abideth;

*The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him Who with us sideth;  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

—Martin Luther

## ***Sola Scriptura* is the Testimony of My Life**

This is not just a topic of theological discussion for me. I have based my life on the truth, testimony, and trustworthiness of the Bible. This is my life! But not like a legal library—authority, authenticity, strength, and more...

In the early days of my ministry, there was a great battle for the Bible—not just in the world, but in our denomination. Many had embraced accommodating views of Scripture that undermined biblical authority and aligned with liberal duplicity.

Yet, far beyond the view of the reformation of a denomination, I have had affirmation and amplification of truth in my own life.

When I have been...

- Discouraged—comfort and consolation
- Doubt—reason to believe
- Death—a word to assure
- Demands—encouragement and endurance

“O God, from my youth You have taught me, and I still proclaim Your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim Your might to another generation, Your power to all those to come” (Psalm 71:17-18 ESV).

So what? What do I want you to know, see and do?

What is your truth source? Is it your authority?

**I want us to be resolute in our commitment to teach and live according to the truth of Scripture.** As a pastor, my greatest task and my greatest treasure are preaching God’s truth and seeing the impact in the lives of those who hear, embrace and believe. The heart of the Scripture is the gospel—the message of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. We believe!

Is your life a living example of the Word coming to life?

**I want us to be reformed through the teaching of the Word that leads to engagement in our community and culture, and that challenges and changes the world.** Our world needs a radically different message from the church—not one adapting to the current trends of society.

Is *Sola Scriptura* your testimony?

**I want us to be reckless in our abandonment to relying upon and risking our future on the Word of God.** There will come a day when it will be evident whether we have built our lives on trivialities or realities. I am relying on the Word of God and God of the Word. That's my testimony. "Here I stand!"