

“*SOLA SCRIPTURA*”

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. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV)

The last Sunday of this month is being observed throughout the world as the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted “95 theses” on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The custom was at University of Wittenberg to post matters for debate in this manner. Within two weeks, copies of Luther’s “95 theses” had spread throughout Germany. Within two months it was being distributed throughout Europe. In that time also, the “95 theses” had been translated from Latin to German and printed copies circulated throughout Germany. It became the first controversy in history to be aided by the printing press.

This event marked the birth of the Protestant Reformation. In the Reformation period, five Latin phrases emerged which summarized the main theological beliefs of the Protestants which set them apart from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. These were *Sola scriptura* (only Scripture), *Sola fide* (only by faith), *Sola gratia* (grace alone), *Solus Christus* (by Christ alone), *Soli Deo Gloria* (only to God be glory).

The symbol of the Lutheran Church throughout the world is a white, five petal rose. It is called Luther’s rose. The five petals are symbols of the five solae of the Reformation.

Beginning this Sunday, I will have a series of five sermons on these five Latin phrases which summarize the five main differences we have with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

The first of these distinctives of Reformation doctrine is *sola scriptura*. Scripture is divinely inspired, the Word of God, authoritative.

1.) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,... (2 Timothy 3:16a NKJV) 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. (2 Peter 1:20-21 NKJV)

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2 NKJV)

There are many holy books in the world, *Quran, Bhagavad Gita, Book of Mormon* and hundreds more. They are all about a god or gods; but only the *Bible* is given to us by the only true and living God. Only in the Bible does God reveal who He is, why He made us, and what He wants us to do. Through Moses He said,

'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 'And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him. 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' - "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18-22 NKJV)

The Bible does not merely contain the words of God. In its entirety it is the Word of God. Every other holy book is presumption, the work of false prophets.

They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, To gods they did not know, To new gods, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. (Deuteronomy 32:16-17 NKJV)

Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. (1 Corinthians 10:20 NKJV)

Only the Bible tells us, in God's own words why we must be saved and how we can be saved from His wrath which our sins deserve. Only the Bible tells us in His own words that God loves us. There is only one name under heaven whereby we must be saved, the name Jesus, God's Son. Wherever Christian missionaries have gone, they teach the people to read so that they can read for themselves God's Word.

2.) 'You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. 'You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 18:4-5 NKJV)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV)

The Bible is the very Word of God. Its words came to the prophets and apostles by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Its authority is from God. The authority of the Scripture does not come from ministers, Sessions, Presbyteries, or denominations. Neither does it depend upon whether we accept its authority. Every utterance of God in His Word demands our unhesitating, complete obedience and acceptance. Every commandment of God whether You shall do no murder, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, Love your neighbor as yourself, Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as Christ has forgiven you. All statutes or commandments in the Bible are the commands of God to everyone who believes in Him and should be obeyed willingly and humbly.

The Bible is clear enough that everyone who reads it in faith can understand all he/she needs to know for salvation and to live a life pleasing to God. There are many difficult teachings, some of which we may never understand. There are other teachings that good and godly people may disagree about the interpretation or application. Enough of the Bible is clear enough that every ordinary person can read and understand it without a learned scholar or clergy to explain what it says. People from many cultures and backgrounds who believe the Bible is God's Word agree on the vast majority of its teachings. None of the teachings on which they disagree affect salvation. That the Bible is clear to the ordinary person differs from the teaching of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other churches who teach that we need to study the traditions of the church in order to understand Scripture.

3.) and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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. (2 Timothy 3:15-17 NKJV)

The Holy Scriptures are both efficacious and sufficient. Efficacious means that they contain power in and of themselves to cause changes to occur in the heart and life of the person who reads them.

"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? (Jeremiah 23:29 NKJV)

Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them. (Jeremiah 5:14 NKJV)

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 NKJV)

There is a difference between the Law of God and the laws of men. Both demand that we obey the law and if we do not, we must face the consequences. But in the Law of God there is not only the demand for obedience, there is the power to create in us a new heart that accepts God's teachings and desires to obey God and live life pleasing Him.

The Bible is sufficient. It gives us all we need to know in order to receive salvation, live a life pleasing to God, and to have fellowship with God. We do not need the teachings of tradition, nor do we need priests to act as our mediators in order to approach God. There are no deficiencies in Scripture that require new revelations to update it.

The argument is sometimes made that a book written by men living in the ancient world could not possibly give answers and guidance to those of us living in this modern world with its technological advances and rapidly changing society. That would be true if it were written by men in the ancient world. Its Author is the eternal, omniscient God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.