

Theme: Scripture alone is the ultimate source of truth and the final authority for the beliefs and practice of Christians and the Church.

I. Intro - Luther at Leipzig

- A. June 1519 debate vs Johann Eck
- B. Eck does not want debate Luther on NT texts
- C. He says Luther is going against the authority of the Church and councils which condemned the same ideas of Jan Hus
- D. Luther saw teaching of the church and Scripture in direct contradiction, and both claiming authority - and Luther chose Scripture
- E. What does Sola Scriptura mean? Why is it important?

II. The Ultimate Authority of God's Word

- A. Jesus, the Pharisees and the authority of God's Word
Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" Matthew 15:1-2
 - 1. Disciples eating without ceremonial washing
 - 2. Tradition of elders - not in Scripture anywhereJesus replied, "**And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?** ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ⁵ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' ⁶ he is not to 'honor his father' with it. **Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.** Matthew 15:3-6

- 1. Jesus goes to heart of issue - tradition vs Scripture
- 2. Scripture commanded one thing, tradition another
- 3. They nullified Scripture for tradition - there can only be one ultimate authority

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ⁸ "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." Matthew 15:7-9

- 1. This had been a problem for centuries - replace God's Word with the word of man
- 2. To make God's Word equal to human tradition or ideas nullifies the Word of God and makes our worship vain

B. Understanding Sola Scriptura

- 1. Sola Scriptura means that Scripture alone is the ultimate source of truth and the final authority for the beliefs and practice of Christians and the Church.
- 2. The Scripture is our final, absolute authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice for individual believers and for the Church. The Scripture is not to be added to, detracted from, or changed by later tradition or extra-biblical revelation. Every doctrinal formulation or pronouncement by any individual or council, whether of creed, confession, theology, or experience must be put to the test of the full counsel of God as revealed in Holy Scripture.

3. This does not mean we do not value the teachings of the Church down through the ages, or that they have no authority for us. However, it does mean that their authority is always drawn from and subservient to the ultimate authority of Scripture.
4. The commands of God must outweigh all authority and examples of men - Jerome

III. The Need for Sola Scriptura - Then and Now

- A. The historical need for Sola Scriptura - Biblical times
 Jesus replied, “And **why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?**... ⁶ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus **you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition....** ⁹ They worship me in vain; **their teachings are but rules taught by men.**”
 Matthew 15:3, 6, 9

1. The Pharisees, like Israel before, abandoned Scripture for tradition
2. They nullified God’s Word to keep tradition
3. The end result - teachings were only words of men
4. This was true in Jesus’ day, and in days of Isaiah

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ **To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.** Isaiah 8:19–20

1. How do we know God’s will? Mediums, spiritists?
2. Go to Scripture - all must agree with Word of God!

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Galatians 1:8–9

1. Paul said even an apostle or an angel can not change the Gospel once for all preached and given to the church
2. No one - apostle, angel, Church council can alter the Gospel given once and for all
3. To try and change this brings eternal condemnation!

- B. The need for Sola Scriptura during the Reformation era

1. The Roman Catholic Church taught that Tradition and Scripture were equal in authority
2. The RCC refused to even debate the meaning of biblical texts - they said the Tradition had already decided the true interpretation
3. Became canon law at Trent where it was decreed that all must agree with the following or be accursed forever
 - a. Tradition and Scripture are equal
 - b. The apocrypha is Scripture
 - c. The Vulgate is the ultimate version of Scripture to be used, and it may not be disputed
4. In reality this meant tradition governed the life and practice of Christians rather than Scripture. In fact, the main beliefs and practices of Christians - penance, indulgences, prayers for the dead, the sinlessness of Mary, etc - had no biblical basis

5. This also happened with radicals who said Spirit spoke directly to them and that was equal to Scripture
6. Whenever we accept an authority as equal to God's Word, we will ultimately subjugate Scripture to that other authority

C. The need for Sola Scriptura now

1. The current catechism of the RCC still maintains that tradition and Scripture are both equal and necessary
2. But the situation has gotten worse today!
 - a. Ligonier/Lifeway poll in 2014 of Americans
 1. God is the author of Scripture - 47% agreed
 2. The Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches - 43% agreed
 3. The Bible alone is the written word of God - 48% agreed
 4. The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true - 41% agreed
 5. The Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do - 49% agreed
 - b. In Reformation times virtually 100% of the people agreed Scripture was God's infallible, true, authoritative Word, but today less than half of our neighbors believe this
 - c. Many churches have totally caved on the authority of Scripture, giving authority to emotions and internal beliefs and desires

Church of Scotland theological forum report on sexuality - Another more inclusive argument in favour of same- sex relationships rests on a distinction between the written text of Scripture and the living Word of God, the latter being associated with Jesus Christ who speaks to us in our hearts and consciences. According to this argument, we owe our allegiance to Jesus Christ the Word made flesh rather than adherence to the literal words of Scripture, and, for that reason, if people believe that Jesus is now calling the Church to a new understanding of how faithfulness may be displayed in human relationships, this should be taken seriously as a contemporary form of obedience. (http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/39512/2017_Theological_Forum.pdf)

- d. The greatest competitor for Sola Scriptura today is not tradition of the Church but rather personal experience, desire and belief
- e. This means that the truth regarding salvation, the uniqueness of Christ, ethics of right and wrong are no longer determined by Scripture, but rather by what individuals think or feel based on their own experience
- f. While the Church at the time of the Reformation was awash in extra biblical beliefs and practices based on traditions which often contradicted Scripture, today the church is awash in extra beliefs and practices based on personal experiences which often contradict Scripture.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I believe that Sola Scriptura is true?

1. Do I believe that Scripture alone is the Word of God written?
2. Do I believe that Scripture is the final authority over me?

3. What other things compete with Scripture as authorities over my life?

- a. Personal experience
- b. Personal belief, emotions or desires
- c. Popular opinion
- d. Political philosophy
- e. Cultural traditions

4. What besides Scripture governs my thoughts & beliefs?

B. Do I live as if Sola Scriptura is true?

- 1. No matter what I may say - how do I live?
- 2. Does my daily life show Scripture is final authority - or something else?
- 3. In the final analysis, what other things govern my behavior?
 - a. Personal experience
 - b. Personal belief, emotions or desires
 - c. Popular opinion
 - d. Political philosophy
 - e. Cultural traditions

C. The Table of the Lord

- 1. Christ has given us the Table so that we might be fed and strengthened
- 2. Here we confess our sins and receive fresh grace for the battle

3. Come confess sins and receive the Word of forgiveness (1 John 1:9)

Sola Scripture - The Ultimate Authority of Scripture Alone

Matthew 15:1-9
October 1, 2017
Communion
Acts 20:32

Teaching keywords: Word of God; God's Will and Guidance

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” ³ Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ ⁶ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ⁸ “‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’”
Matthew 15:1–9