

Title: Sola Scriptura
Text: Psalm 19
Theme: The Word of God is our final authority
Series: Reformation Month 2017 pt.1
Prop Stmt.

Psalm 119.130 says: “*The unfolding of your words gives light.*” The revealing of God’s words brings light into the darkness. John Calvin was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in France, who, after discovering what the Bible actually said, understood the gospel who then in the early 1500’s, left the priesthood and began to preach the gospel. He eventually ended up in Geneva, Switzerland where his greatest years of ministry were spent teaching, preaching, writing and pastoring and where his church, St. Peter’s, stands to this day. Across the way from St. Peter’s Church in Geneva is the “Reformation Wall.” Inscribed on the wall on either side of the central statues are these words in Latin, Post Tenebras Lux which means, “After darkness, light.”

The Reformation, as it was named, was the attempt by certain leaders to reform the Roman Catholic Church, which had for hundreds of years moved away from the true message and mission of the church. The rediscovery of the gospel was made possible because of the rediscovery of the Bible. For centuries, the Bible was kept hidden from the people. Even monks and priests did not have their own copies, or access to an entire Bible. People were told what to believe without the opportunity to see for themselves if that was actually what the Bible said. The result was, the actual message of the Bible was hidden in darkness under layers of manmade traditions and teachings that were built on partial truths and kept people in bondage to fear and guilt. Men like, Luther, Calvin, Beza, Knox, Zwingli and Tyndale lit a match with their preaching, but it was the rediscovery of the Bible and its translation into the language of the people and its distribution because of the invention of the printing press that supplied the fuel that ignited a flame that has never gone out. The Reformation was not always pretty, but one foundational truth, one pivotal, foundational truth was rediscovered when the Bible was rediscovered and that was this: The Bible is God’s Word and since it is God’s revelation, the Bible alone is our sole and final authority.

What we believe is not ultimately based on church councils, creeds, doctrinal statements, papal or denominational pronouncements, Wikipedia, YouTube, Oprah, Fox news, twitter or websites. What we believe is not subject to Facebook likes, trendy views or t-shirt slogans. All of those things will fade. For one likes it or not, all beliefs, all opinions, all councils, creeds, sermons and statements are under the authority of THE authority, which is God and God has spoken and has revealed himself in his Word and through his Word. On this first Sunday of the month of October, 2017 in which we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we reaffirm our belief in Sola Scriptura. The Scriptures alone are our final authority.

Read Text:

- I. **God has spoken through Creation in General.** (1-6)

General Revelation is God's witness of Himself in and through creation (that is what God has made). The first 6 verses of this Psalm say that God speaks through the heavens during the day and night. Every day is a different sermon and every night a new devotional. This series of sermons that God has been preaching for thousands of years is anything but boring or monotonous.

The sermon that God preaches in creation is great but it is intentionally incomplete. General revelation through the creation is limited because we do not learn anything about the Love of God, the essential nature and character of sin, our need for faith and repentance, or the content of our faith - which is our need for Jesus Christ demonstrated in his life and death and resurrection. That is why we need the Bible. The Bible, as we will see, is God's commentary on His own creation.

II. **God has spoken through his Word in Particular.** (7-11)

The Bible tells us how we are to understand who the Creator is (God), who the creation is (us and everything around us). God's Word is his direct message to us. The fact is, God has chosen to communicate to us through his Word and his Word is the only way in which we can understand anything with certainty. In the deepest sense, we do not judge the Word, the Word judges us. Beginning in verse 7 we are given several descriptions about how effective God's Word is.

A. **God's word works perfectly for depression.** (7a)

The law of the Lord (a description of the instructions of God's Word) is perfect for people who are depressed because it is not merely good information; it is life and power that breathes life into the soul. The word revive is the same word translated "restore" in Psalm 23 (he restores my soul).

B. **God's word is right for wisdom.** (7b)

When you look at your world or even look at your own life, you are very capable of coming to the wrong conclusion. When evil people appear to be getting away with evil behavior, you are tempted to think that it doesn't matter how you live. But, God's word is right for wisdom and tells you that there is more going on that you realize and that the rest of the story has not yet played out. God's Word reminds you of that because you are tempted to forget. God's word is right for wisdom.

C. **God's word gives instruction for joy.** (8a)

God intends for you to live with joy and the instruction from his word tells us what to believe and do so that we will have joy as a result. We tend to think that our way is better, and we find out the hard way that it isn't.

D. **God's word is pure for life.** (8b)

When you listen to the news or to a teacher in class or to a preacher in church, you have to be on guard. Is what is said really true? However, when you read God's Word you do not have to be on guard. It is pure. It is unmixed with evil. Everything in it is good for your life and good for giving you light to live by.

E. God's Word tells us what really matters. (9-11)

So, because God's Word is true and righteous, treasure this more than gold. Develop an appetite for this because it is the sweetest thing you will ever taste and the reward for pursuing God's Word is far greater than any goal you could achieve.

III. God's Word is all about Jesus!

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me." John 5.39

It is possible to read the Bible and miss the point. The Pharisees attempted to use God's Word to make themselves look important, to impress others with what they knew, to impose their authority over others and to intimidate others. Jesus said, look, you study the Scriptures, but they do not do you any good because you have missed the point of the Bible. The Bible is all about Jesus.

You need to think about that on a couple of levels. 1) You cannot properly interpret the Bible unless you realize how Jesus the focal point of the Bible. Therefore, 2) everything in the Bible not only points to Jesus, the purpose of that is to point you to Jesus and to help you follow Jesus better. If I learn the Bible well in order to impress you with all that I know about the Bible, and I know that Jesus is what it is all about, but in my study, I do not love Jesus more nor do I look more like him, then I have missed the point. I may understand the Word with my intellect, but I am to grasp the Word with my will and affections also. Since the Word is all about Jesus, my posture before the Word is to be humble and personal. Do not read this like you would Wikipedia. Read this as a diary.

A. Jesus is the Word –

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
John 1.1

Just as creation is the result of God's speaking "in the beginning" Jesus is the very expression of God because He is God. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. All things were made through him. Jesus was the mouthpiece of God who spoke and whose word is so powerful that it caused things to come into being that heretofore had not yet existed. Since Jesus is the expression of God in human form, then obviously the expression of God in written form is going to correspond to the expression of God in human form. If you cut the Bible, it bleeds Jesus.

B. Jesus is the Hero of the Bible.

That means that Jesus is the Central Figure of the Bible and that you cannot interpret the Bible correctly if you do not look at the Bible through the lens of Jesus. Therefore, God's Word is either telling you about your need for Jesus, or it is telling you how Jesus is everything that you need and has provided everything for you. The greatest thing that you could ever know is how much you need Jesus and how Jesus is everything that you need. But, in order for you to understand how much you need Jesus, you need to know how needy you are. So, God has given us his law in which he reveals his standard of perfection and we read it and feel condemned – as we should. We do not measure up to God and we don't like feeling that way. Good! That's the point. The law of God is intended to drive you to humble yourself and confess your need. Now you are in a position to realize how perfect of a Savior he is.

IV. God's Word is Powerful and Precise.

“For the word of God is living 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.” Hebrews 4.12

“For the Word of God is living and active.” These first two words describe God's Word as a dynamic that cannot be contained. That it is cannot be controlled, limited, hidden or denied. It is living and active. What does he mean by living? Who of us is not awed in our study of the origin of a human life? Yes, we learn early on the biological reality of the event in a science class or in a more sophisticated university course. But, even though you may be well versed in the actual science of it all, there is a mystery, a deep pondering, a holy-like trance that comes upon you as you watch it take place. You may be an Ob-gyn doctor, living in a world of conception, formation, labor and delivery, but when you or your spouse becomes pregnant, it is not just science; it is exhilarating. The formation of life is literally awe-some! It is known, yet imponderable. God's Word has always been the source of life. He spoke and the universe came into existence. He breathed into Adam and Adam became a living being. He breathed out through his servants and they wrote His Word, which has been preserved to this day. So, yes, God's Word is the source of life, but “source” is not the major emphasis that is here in v. 12. That aspect is here and is apparent, but the word, translated “living” really has idea of being dynamic and powerful so as to effectively be able to examine, discern and judge. It is also the first word in the original text, of v.12, meaning that it stands in an emphatic and prominent position. This is what is so truly awesome about the Bible. It is God breathing out. It is God's pulse, God's thunder, God's song, and God's whisper. It is God whose voice breaks rocks and calms storms that is speaking.

A couple of years ago, I spoke to some college students in a church at U of M. I preached on prayer, and the fact that we can pray with boldness and confidence because God always keeps his promises. The next summer I was invited back to speak again, but before I did, a girl got up and gave a testimony. She talked about a very difficult and intensely personal issue. In the course of her story, she mentioned that she was listening

to a speaker the previous summer; she had no idea who he was, and cannot even remember the sermon, except he said that “God always keeps his promises.” She said, it was as if, right then, her entire world changed. Her struggle of believing God’s forgiveness and God’s love and God’s power were seemingly changed, in a moment and she went on to talk about the practical outworking of that truth in view of the sin that she had been in bondage to for so long.

This is exactly what the AH is saying. The Word of God is not only powerful, it is precise. It does right to the heart of a matter and exposes it so that it can be taken care of. The implication of all of this is that:

V. **God’s Word is Sufficient for life.**

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...” 2 Peter 1.3-4

A. **It makes us wise for salvation**

“You have become acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3.15

God’s word tells us all that we need to know in order to be in a right relationship with God. And it does so in a way that helps us see how the whole picture. The Bible begins with God living with and enjoying his people and it ends with God doing the same. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

B. **It makes us competent for every good work**

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable...that the man of God may be competent for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3.17

The Word prepares us to face whatever may come our way. God’s Word helps you think right when someone sins against you and when you sin. It helps prepare you for when things go well by warning you about pride and it helps prepare you for death. So, whether it is life or death or anything in between, the word, rightfully understood and applied is sufficient for whatever you face.

C. **It makes us more like Christ**

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” John 17.17

When Jesus prayed for us to become more like him, he stated that the Word of God is the means that God uses to make us more like him. Sanctify (set apart like Jesus) them through your truth; your word is truth.

VI. **God's Word is Trustworthy.**

My daughter works in the bone marrow transplant department of St. Jude Children's Research Center. Children who are suffering from terminal diseases come there from all over the world. When a child is diagnosed with leukemia comes to the hospital, she can often sit down with the family and the child and tell them that if they follow the protocol that is designed for that child, that there is a high likelihood that child will be cured. Being part of helping a child live and giving that child back to his or her parents with a new lease on life is wonderful, but it is also very weighty. Not every child makes it. She can say, there is such and such likelihood you will make it, but she cannot guarantee it.

I am grateful for what she and the many others she works with do, but I am more grateful that we have a God who cannot lie who has spoken and this God who cannot die has spoken and has said, "he who believes in me, will never die." And we get to tell people about eternal life in Christ knowing that every single person who will take God up on his promises will never be let down.

A. God, who cannot lie has spoken.

"God is not man, that he should lie." Numbers 23.19

"...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."
Titus 1.2-3

B. God, who cannot die has spoken.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1.8

VII. **God's Word is Forever.**

Do you know what this means? God's Word will always be true. Jesus will always be the hero. God's Word will always be powerful and precise. God's Word will always be sufficient and God's Word will always be worthy of trust.

"The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God will stand forever." Isaiah 40.8

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Luke 21.33

Today, you have the Bible in your language and in several excellent translations. Our biggest threat to this truth is pastors who do not preach it all and congregations who do

not read it all. It may well be said of our time, after light, darkness. The only explanation for that would be a failure to actually believe that God's Word is as true and powerful as it says it is. The recovery of the Bible began a reforming of Christianity, that is still going on. We can thank God for what was started 500 years ago, while we recognize that we still have a very long ways to go. Read your Bible and learn your Bible.

So today, we affirm that the sole authority for the church is the Bible (66 books; Genesis to Malachi and Matthew – Revelation) and it is verbally (meaning every word) inspired (breathed out by God) inerrant (without error) infallible (incapable of error), totally sufficient and trustworthy.

We further affirm that the authority and sufficiency of Scripture extends to the entire Bible, and therefore the Bible is our final authority for all doctrine (what we believe) and practice (what we do).

We also affirm that truth ever remains as a central issue for the Church and that we must resist anything that would water down God's truth, attempt to redefine God's truth or attempt to add to God's truth. Today, we reaffirm our belief and commitment to Sola Scriptura.