



Course Overview

500th Anniversary of the Reformation

5 Solas of the Reformation- Objections will mostly deal with where the reformers differed from the Roman Catholic Church.

5 Points of Calvinism- Objections come from Arminian theology and broader culture.

Sola Scriptura

- Goals:
 - Define the doctrine
 - Handle misunderstandings (large group discussion)
 - Give Scriptural Support
 - Answer objections (small group discussion)
 - Application to Christian life (So What?)
 - Closing video
 - End time: 10:05am

Sola Scriptura Defined

Background:

- How can a sinful human be saved and restored to fellowship with God?
- How are we to worship and serve God?

These, and other important questions can't be answered until we answer the larger question: What is the ultimate authority?

Since God is the ultimate authority, we must know how and where he has spoken.

Through our personal experiences?
Various religious texts?
Religious leaders? One leader?
The Church?

The Reformers Answer was Sola Scriptura or Scripture Alone.

The primary issue of debate in the Reformation was over the doctrine of Justification. How is a person saved? This has come to be known as the material principle, or main issue.

But this main issue could not be answered without addressing the question of final authority. Who gets to say how someone is saved?

Sola Scriptura is known as the formal principle of the Reformation. It determines how we answer all other questions.

Definition: The Bible alone is the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Sola Scriptura in the Westminster Confession
"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these...[list of 66 books]...all which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life." (1.2)

Sola Scriptura in the Westminster Confession
"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."(1.4)

Scripture is self authenticating

Sola Scriptura in the Westminster Confession

"The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at anytime is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." (1.6)

Sufficiency of Scripture

Sola Scriptura in the Westminster Confession

"The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." (1.9)

Self Interpretation. Scripture, in a sense provides an infallible commentary on itself.

Sola Scriptura in the Westminster Confession

"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." (1.10)

All other sources, helpful as they may be, must ultimately be judged by Scripture.

Implications

1. The Bible alone is divinely inspired.
 1. The Bible alone is infallible and inerrant.
 2. The Bible alone is the supreme authority in matters of doctrine and practice.
 3. The Bible alone is the supreme authority on its own interpretation.
 4. The Bible is self-authenticating- it testifies to its own authority.

Implications

2. The Bible alone is sufficient to teach us how to be saved and to live a life pleasing to God.
3. The authority of the Church depends on the Bible, not the reverse.
4. Church tradition is not necessary for the proper interpretation of the Bible.

Implications

5. Christian's have the right to "private interpretation" of the Bible.
6. The Bible can be interpreted using ordinary principles of textual interpretation.
7. The Bible *as a whole* is necessary and sufficient for right doctrine. (Tota Scriptura)

Misunderstandings

1. "Only the Bible contains truth."
2. "All special revelation is contained in the Bible."
3. "The Bible tells us everything we need to know."

Misunderstandings

4. "The Bible is the only authority in the life of a Christian."
5. "An individual Christian can understand the Bible all on his own."
6. "We should accept only what the Bible teaches, not church creeds or confessions."
7. "The Bible should be interpreted without any reference to church traditions."

Scriptural Support

"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you."
(Deuteronomy 4:2)

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7-11)

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word
¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:9,11,105,130)

Matthew 4:1-11. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Essentially a theological dispute and how does Jesus respond?

¹ Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said; ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³ He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother,' and, Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ⁵ But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," ⁶ he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.
(Acts 17:10-11)

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself... (Hebrews 6:13)

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Summary Argument

- The Bible is the Word of God.
- The Bible affirms that it is the Word of God.
- The Bible doesn't recognize any other source of teaching as the Word of God.
- The Bible condemns attempts to place human traditions over the Word of God or adding to the Word of God in Any way.
- Therefore, the Bible alone is the Word of God.
- Therefore, the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Objections

1. "The Bible doesn't tell us everything Jesus and the apostles taught."
2. "*Sola Scriptura* makes an idol out of the Bible. It's bibliolatry!"
3. "The Bible doesn't tell us some things we need to know."
4. "*Sola Scriptura* has led to thousands of different Protestant denominations."

Objections

5. "1 Timothy 3:15 says the church is 'the pillar and the foundation of the truth'."
6. "The Bible doesn't define the canon (i.e., what books are in the Bible)."
7. "The teaching of the Bible isn't clear on some important points of doctrine."
8. "The New Testament church preceded the New Testament scriptures. Wouldn't that give the church priority?"

Application

1. *Sola Scriptura* means that we can have full confidence in the *sufficiency* of Scripture.
2. *Sola Scriptura* means that we can have full confidence in the *clarity* of Scripture.
3. *Sola Scriptura* means that we can have full confidence in the *infallibility* of Scripture.
4. *Sola Scriptura* means that we can have full confidence in the *power* of Scripture.

Application

5. *Sola Scriptura* frees our consciences from bondage to any human traditions or laws.
6. *Sola Scriptura* means that our hard work in biblical studies will pay dividends.
7. *Sola Scriptura* implies that we don't need (and shouldn't seek) "latter-day revelations."
8. *Sola Scriptura* guards us from putting more confidence in human wisdom than in the Bible.
