

Reformation Sunday
“Sola Scriptura”
II Timothy 3:14-17
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
October 30, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God, which is inspired, infallible, in errant and eternal. II Timothy 3:14-17 says [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

As we remember the Reformation the word remember is a very interesting word that is used in the Bible; remember the Sabbath, remember the body and blood of the Lord, bring your children back here to this Ebenezer and remember what I've done. God's constantly calling us to remember and we need to remember that God never changes. That's why we cannot live in the past, but learn from the past and live in the present that we would change the future. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the future, as we're facing it, is in desperate need of the life changing, soul saving, redeeming work of the Gospel into this future, even as it needs it now in the present.

Therefore, it is at moments like this that I love to go back to moments of history such as the Reformation. There are two unmistakable facts that we need to know as we walk through this text and distill some basic truths about the Word of God today. This is foundational for us. 24 years ago, when I became pastor here at Briarwood, we had a service to honor our founding pastor, and then we had another service where the elders, charged Frank (the founding pastor) to figure out what would be done in a 'passing of the mantle' service. In other words, remember Elijah and Elisha for when Elijah moved on, he passed his mantle to Elisha, and so our 40 year founding pastor was to pass a mantel.

I remember Frank coming to me the week before this service and said to me, "Well, I'm still praying through this thing, trying to figure it out." And I said, "I have no doubt you'll figure it out. I'll just try to be ready for it." He then said, "I'm trying to figure out how do I get that fireplace mantle off and bring it to the service" and that was Frank's effort at humor at that moment. Of course, that's not what happened at that service but what happened at that service is what you'll find in my office and that was the handing of a Bible to me. That was the mantle.

Then I remember when I was preaching on a series of sermons here titled 'Thy Word is Truth' one of the young men in this congregation who actually was working for the construction crew that was building the sanctuary told me that on the day this platform was being poured with concrete before it would be overlaid with the wood, he came in early that morning and he took a Bible that now rests right under where this pulpit is. The concrete was poured around it, but I would have, you know, as firm as that concrete is, something firmer is in that concrete and that is God's Word. "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever" (I Peter 1:24-25). The Word of the Lord is the only thing here that's perfect that is headed to forever.

What about the church? It's always prevailing, but here it's not perfect. It will be perfected. You're not perfected. You are accounted as perfect in the righteousness of Christ, but you are being perfected by the work of sanctification now with that living, abiding, perfect Word of God. It is that that is crucial to us. That's why there are two unmistakable facts that I want you to know as we look at this text for reformation Sunday from II Timothy.

The first unmistakable fact is there are five solos. Not long after the Reformation, there were two attempts to undermine the Reformation, one from the Roman Church and one from error within the Reformed Church. That error was called arminianism. So, at the Synod of Dort, they recaptured and answered the five errors of arminianism with the five points of Calvinism. They called upon the solas that had come out of the Reformation. The word 'alone' is crucial in the Reformation – that we are saved by grace alone (*Sola Gratia*). Grace is never alone and always leaves tracks of its presence, but those tracks don't save us. It's God's grace that saves us. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone (*Sola Fide*). What does God's grace give us? God's grace gives us faith whereby we receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Ephesians 2:8 says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.*

So, we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone and there's only one Savior in Christ alone (*Solo Christo*). When we receive Christ, we receive many benefits and blessings along with Him. When we God's grace lays hold of us, it gives us a changed life. When we believe, faith has works that manifest its reality, but the changes that grace brings, the works that evidence faith and the blessings that Christ gives to us, those things do not save us. The One alone who saves us is Christ because of God's grace, which gives us faith to lay hold of Him and ultimately, why is all this being done? It is to the praise of His glorious grace.

That's why those five solos are there but there is one I haven't mentioned yet and that's the first unmistakable fact I want you to lay hold. *Sola Scriptura* – the Scripture alone is our only rule of faith in practice. The Reformation is amazing and the cauldron of it began in the 16th century, from the magisterial reformers, like Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley and all of these magisterial reformers who actually began in the 15th century. It was happening all over the place – Italy, England, France, Germany. One of the burdens of these men God was using was God's Word for God's people in their own languages.

That's why the reformers eventually get to the crucial issue. It is not the culture that is our rule of faith in practice. It is not the fallibility of men in Christ's church, even those ordained and gifted men. Men err, counsels err but there is only one infallible, inerrant, sufficient foundation. How firm a foundation has been laid for you in His excellent Word – that the Scripture alone is our only authoritative, infallible, inerrant, sufficient rule for faith – what we believe – and for life – how we live for the One who saved us and that was the crucial issue that was established.

It not only preceded the Reformation with men like Wycliffe, Huss and Tyndall, and then fed into the Reformation, but even a magisterial reformer like Luther finally articulates it for us. Yes, on the 31st of October, he went and nailed on the Wittenberg door what amounted to an invitation to the scholars of the day to debate his 95 theses. Luther had no idea where this thing was going. I mean, why would he have written it in Latin if he wanted it to get to everyone for it was his students that took it down, translated it into the common language, put it in pamphlets and then sent it everywhere. Luther was profoundly, but merely in a sense, calling for a debate, a forum with the powers that be in the Holy See of Rome, calling upon the Vatican for this debate, particularly in light of the so-called sacrament of penance and its related issues of the indulgence.

It was right there on his doorstep, just across the river where Tetzel with his little ditty

was maneuvering and manipulating the people as a fundraiser for the building of the Saint Peter's Basilica. His little ditty went like this; As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs. Luther confronts/deals with that for he has been teaching the book of Romans. Romans 3 says it's a righteousness that's provided for us in Christ by which we are saved and then Romans 5:1 says having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So Luther calls for this debate, but lit a firestorm of the Reformation.

Just a few years later, having done a number of these debates, he arrives for the premium moment. All of the political power was arrayed against him of the Holy Roman Empire. All of the power of the church was there at the diet of worms and it is there that they brought to bear not only the papal bull that called for his life but the death warrant was out and he was called to recant. Luther asked them to give him the evening for everything was at stake – his life, his work, and all of God's people that were looking to him. When he came back, that monumental statement came from him 'my conscience is captive to the Word of God' and then less convinced from God's Word came his statement, 'here I stand, I can do no other.' It is that word that stands above all other powers for it is God's Word. That is why the vast majority of these reformers will die for you to have that Bible in front of you right now. Why would they die for that?

Here is one other unmistakable fact. We have often said that this nation and certainly all the nations of the world, but in this movement in the deconstruction of Western civilization, from the secular progressivism and humanism and all that's there, it isn't a red wave that's going to deliver you. I'm all for a red wave or a purple wave, maybe but that's not my point. What is going to deliver this nation from its descent into depravity is a Gospel wave – a Gospel awakening, a soul changing, heart changing, life transforming movement of the Gospel, just like we saw in the Great Awakening, maybe grander for the Great Awakening owed its very foundations to the reformation of the church.

I pray for that Gospel awakening, but I am more convinced than ever that Gospel awakening awaits a church reformation – a new reformation, a reformation where the church does not look to personality, technique, or programs, but it looks to the power of the Word of God unleashed in the lives of men and women as it's preached, shared, lived, and spoken with the fruit of the Spirit that begins with love. That is absolutely essential. So what is that word that is desperately needed in its reforming movement in the church?

Paul gives us some insights on it from II Timothy. What I will draw out from II Timothy 3 will not be exhaustive but I want you to see that in the life and ministry of Jesus, He said every one of these we see here in this text. In John 10:35, He said, the Scripture cannot be broken. It's infallible, it's reliable. In John 5:39, He says, 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have life, but they bear witness of Me.' The power to give life is in the Scriptures when Christ is exalted, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets He explained Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). Our Lord made it abundantly clear, perhaps no more powerfully than in John 17:17, when He prayed to the Father, 'Father, (set My people apart), sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth.' Thy Word doesn't contain it or become it, for it is truth. Whose word is it? It's God's Word – Thy Word is truth.

Paul brings this at the end of his life, where he also is placing the mantle in the last epistle, he writes for he places the mantle upon his cherished son in the faith, Timothy. Paul tells him in II Timothy 4:2 to preach the word and then in II Timothy 3 he tells him about that Word. I want to draw out a couple of things for you from this text that alone is our only rule of faith in practice. Let's take another look at the text from II Timothy.

II Timothy 3:14-15 says [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.***

That's the Gospel. What Bible is Timothy working with? It's the Old Testament. You don't have one way of salvation in the Old Testament and another one in the New. In the Old Testament the Gospel is in symbol, sign, shadow, precept and narratives that show us. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). We are saved by grace, alone through faith, alone in Christ alone. Did they have the same clarity that we have in the New Testament that expounds all of those things that are fulfilled in Christ? No, they didn't have the clarity we do, but we have it and now we look back and see the ark as it was pointing to Jesus, the burnt offerings were pointing to Jesus, the wave offerings were pointing to Jesus. Through the Prophets, priests and kings see how Jesus is the Prophet, the Priest and the King.

Now we see that Yom Kippur, that day of atonement is Christ on the cross. That expiation, the scapegoat that takes the sins away from the people is Christ who takes away our sins. That perpetuation, that satisfaction that we desperately need that won't come from bulls and goats came when Christ took our sins and said, "It is finished." It's Him that this is pointing to. He's the Passover. He's the circumcision. He's the tabernacle. He is the temple. It is all yes and amen in Christ beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained Himself in all the Scriptures. It is a Gospel Word. It is a Christ exalting Word and that the Bible we have. Timothy and Paul had the shadows. We have the fulfillment. We have the exposition. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

So, the first thing we learn is we have a Gospel Word – salvation. You can't find it anywhere else and the stewardship of this word to proclaim that Gospel has been given to us. When you preach the gospel, it is Christ exalting. It is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ, not faith in faith. Faith doesn't save you. Jesus saves you by faith. Faith is the instrument. It's not the Savior. The Apostle Paul does not say in II Timothy, 'I suffer these things and I'm not ashamed because I know *when* I believed.' No, he says, 'I know *whom* I have believed and He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him. So here it's a Gospel word, a Christ centered word, a God given word.

II Timothy 3:16a says [16] *All Scripture is breathed out by God...* It's God breathed and that's why the prophets didn't say, 'Isaiah says on behalf of the Lord...' No, they say 'Thus saith the Lord...' That's why the Apostle Paul says in I Thessalonians 2:13, 'I am glad that you received our word for that which it is, the Word of God, not the word of man.' This is God's Word. To me, I think this is one of the challenging things. I want you to know from personal testimony, I did everything I could to avoid the Bible when I was unsaved and the day I got converted, I read the New Testament that night and started looking up where good preachers were that next day. What changed? The Bible hadn't changed for it was I who had changed and it wasn't the fact that I wanted to hear preachers that saved me. It was the fact that God saved me and that's why now God's Word was precious. It was the honey that drips from God – to hear it, to read it, and to know it was everything.

This is one of the telling evidences and I only say what Peter says, 'the believer longs for the Word like the babe longs for the mother's milk' (I Peter 2:2). The pure, unadulterated Word of God is what they desire, what they long for, why? It is God speaking. I've used this illustration before but it fits here. Cindy and I, during COVID had some time to do some things we normally wouldn't have been able to do. So, one of those was to cleaning out boxes that had been

unopened for awhile. In one of those boxes were the letters that she wrote to me during our engagement three months before we were married. We dated for three months and then she went away to school three months before our marriage and that's when she started writing me letters. She wrote pretty much every day. She found the box those letters were in and she took the rubber band off the stack of letters while I'm praying 'Oh, dear Lord, please let every single one of these envelopes be opened. Please!' I didn't want to hear her say 'were you too busy to read my letter that day that I took the time to write every single day.' Thankfully, they had all been opened.

This Bible is God's Word to you, Letters He has written to you. You need it every day. You need it pastorally preached at least every Lord's Day. You need it in your life. God's Word has been given to you. This is why we say, it's infallible, reliable and the Scriptures cannot be broken because it is God's Word and God is trustworthy. God is unfailing. That means what belongs to God is unfailing, and God's Word belongs to Him. Therefore, it is utterly reliable. It tells you how to parent, how to live, how to do business and all of those things for Christ in Christ to God's glory. The blessings are not defined by the metrics of the world, but by praise to God by the way His people live in the power of the Spirit being directed by the Word of God. There is where the prosperity and success of the Gospel is at work, not in the metrics of this world, but in the glorious measurement that our God is being exalted because His people love His Word, know His Word, live His Word, share His Word, proclaim His Word.

His Word is inerrant. Are there difficult passages? Absolutely, but His Word is inerrant and there are answers there. It is actually reliable because there is no error. Why? Because God can't err. It may take a while for the geologist, the scientist, the biologist, the social scientists and us to catch up with Him but God's Word is true. Let every man be a liar (Romans 3:4). It is infallible. It is an errant.

Because it is God given it is also profitable. Here is your Prophet every day, all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable – for teaching, correction, reproof, and training (II Timothy 3:16). This Word is my training camp. It's my spiritual diet. It has the directions for my spiritual exercise. Here is everything I need for godliness. That's what Peter says in II Peter 1:3, that in the Scripture you have all things necessary for godliness and righteousness before the Lord. This is why we say it is our only rule for faith and practice. We don't look somewhere else for faith and defining those practices that are pleasing to Him. It is God's word that we go to. It is God's word that is profitable and that means all of God's Word is profitable.

Finally, it is sufficient that the Man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:17). It is a sufficient Word. It is complete. All that we need pertaining to godliness and living for Him in terms of what we believe and what we do is given to us by precept in His Word and this Word I quote, Psalm 119 is settled in the heavens forever. You also need to know that not all truth is in the Bible. The Bible is not a textbook on physics. Now, when it speaks to physics, it's true. The Bible is not a textbook on geography. When it speaks to geography, it's true. T

The other day, my car was acting crazy. So, what did I end up reading? I didn't turn to II Timothy 3. I went and got the handbook for my car which tells me what this button does and that button does, etc. It told me what to do. And guess what? It was accurate and true. Not all truth is in the Bible. In fact, not all of spiritual truth is in the Bible. John 21:25 says *[25] Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.* So, this is a sovereign God putting what we need sufficiently in His Word.

Deuteronomy 29:29 says [29] *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* This is what God revealed to us and to our children. His Word is sufficient and what we need, but not all truth is in there but everything that's in there is true. All that I need to know Him, love Him, serve Him is in His Word. When people bring to me the claims of truth from God's general revelation, all that I need to evaluate that has been given to me in the Word and that's why we want to develop a Biblical world and life view. As we filter through the claims of the world it can't contradict God's Word if it is of God, and it is true. But all that I need to know Christ, make Christ known, to live for Christ is here in His Word. It is adequate and to make me complete for every good work before the Lord.

Thankfully, every Lord's Day we get to come to this Bible, sing it, read it, pray it, confess it, memorize it, meditate on it, proclaim it, and study it. I'm sure there are people reading this who would dispute me on everything I've said and I'd love to talk with you because I know God's Word will bring you to the God of the Word. If you don't know Jesus, you're on a collision course with hell, but God has given His Word to tell you what He'll do in your life. You can know this Word and not know Him, but you can't know Him without this Word. I'll take whatever time you want to take to talk about it, but I will tell you, I will only do what this Word says with confidence in its reliability, its inerrancy, its sufficiency. I will endeavor to follow this Biblical roadmap to bring you to Jesus who will give you life evermore, and in Him all the promises of God are yes and amen.

Among us who know Him and would say yes, all Scripture is inspired by God, and it's our only rule of faith and practice, many times we don't live consistently that way. I think one of the reasons why is, Satan has devised, snares, and schemes. Some of them are obvious, some of them are very subtle. Some of them are so subtle that many times the preaching we choose to hear is selective. Paul said in Acts 20, 'I am innocent of your blood Ephesus because I declared to you the whole counsel of God, not the selected counsel of God, but the whole counsel of God.' Sometimes Satan can draw us away from the Word read, studied or preached with selected passages, ear tickling passages or twisted passages, and therefore we don't come to all of the Scripture. Pastor, why is that so important? Because it takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian.

Jesus said in Matthew 28 to make disciples teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. So sometimes we can be under preaching that is selective and doesn't submit the preaching to the authority of the Word, but man goes above it and as it were in preaching choices, edits out what might be offensive, difficult, challenging, or what might bring the wrath of the culture. Then we also can get selective where we walk away from those texts that show us the sin that we don't want to deal with. So sometimes we can fall prey to Satan designs and devises of selectivity.

Another one is laziness or what one person called immediacy where we don't want to take the time to do what Paul said in the previous chapter, II Timothy 2:15 which is to study and show yourself approved as a workman who needs not to be ashamed handling accurately the Word of truth. We want immediacy, so we come up with bizarre, exotic doctrines, such as I get new revelation. I can go over here and say things a certain way and I get a word from God. One might say I thought God's Word was sufficient. Why do I need another word from God if I believe what He says about His Word? I need another blessing? So we begin for the sake of immediacy a shortcut and think, why take the time to study, to read, to meditate or memorize His Word

when I can just get a word from God. These exotic doctrines draw us away from the Scripture alone as our rule of faith and practice.

Sometimes it's not just immediacy and wanting a personal word, sometimes we're selective and this is where we desperately need a reformation in the professing evangelical church where we are so much wanting to be a culture player to get cultural applause that we get silent on the very things that culture tells us to shut up. The church's mission is narrow – make disciples, but our message is comprehensive and broad. It speaks to sanctity of life, gender, marriage and parenting, etc. Therefore, our pulpits must not be silent. I must not be selective. You must not be selective. Thoughtful, loving, compassionate, clear, patient, yes, but not selective. We must preach and teach the whole counsel of God and study all of God's Word.

How can you avoid the subtle devices of Satan? Cultivate a love for God's Word, to love the God of the Word. We're not talking about bibliolatry for we're not worshiping the Bible. This is a divine, perfect, complete, inerrant, infallible, sufficient instrument. It is God who saves, and it's designed to bring us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. That's what took hold of the reformers. That's why they died so it could be put in your hands. That's why Sola Scriptura becomes the foundational sola. How do I know you're saved by Christ alone? It is because the Bible says so. How do I know you're saved by faith in Christ? It is because the Bible says so. How do I know I'm saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? It is because the Bible says so.

I know we like to say the Bible says it, I believe it and that settles it, but in reformed doctrine, reformed theology, which is shorthand for the recapturing of this foundational reality of salvation and the authority of God's Word, it's very crux is found in the confidence that we have in the Word of God. Therefore, what we say, is God said it and that settles it. Jesus, I believe it and where I don't help my unbelief.

I love the moment in Daniel 6 where another device has been created to capture Daniel and his companions, and then a death warrant is signed that if one does not worship the King or if one worships and bows before any other gods. Daniel 6:10 says *[10] When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.* It was Daniel's practice to kneel and pray at least three times daily.

I don't know what devices this world is going to come up with. The isms are seemingly endless – scientism, secularism, progressivism, humanism, materialism, utilitarianism. But what we need to do is to do what they did, what the apostles did and the Reformers did. Hear the words of Jesus, “Father, sanctify them in the truth. Thy Word is truth.” Love the Lord today, that's filled with psalms, confessions, worship, reading and preaching of the truth. Love the family altar. Love your quiet time chair where every day by His Spirit in prayer you come to His Word to hear Him, know Him and love Him. Then ask the Lord to fill us up so much that in love we'll speak truth with each other – God's truth and then in love we'll bring that truth to the lost that they may know Him. The truth of God's Word brings you to God. Jesus said as He was praying to the Father in John 17:3, *[3] And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.* Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the moments to be together in Your Word. Thank You for this firm foundation that is ours. Thank You, God, that the presence of Your Spirit and the fellowship of

the saints, the communion of the saints, all of that You will use so that we do not fall prey to Satan's subtle devices. Help us O God to love You through Your Word, by Your Word, in the power of Your Spirit, calling upon You in prayer and calling out to You in praise. May our lives be what the template of this service is to be – to bless the Lord in Spirit and in truth. Thy Word is truth. Amen.