

The Authority of Scripture

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[0 : 00] I had decided that I would continue with the Galatians series because the letter of Galatians is about the gospel.! And it is about the gospel. And it is about the gospel.

And it is about the gospel that was recovered in the Protestant Reformation. So my intent was I would just continue with the next sermon in the series.

As I had done some work and as I worked and prepared, I just struggled through that sermon and really got the sense that the Lord would have me to bring a message that was more particularly connected, more directly connected to the Reformation itself.

And so that is what I decided I would do. And then I needed to settle on what I would speak about. And I felt impressed with the Lord to speak to you this morning about the authority of Scripture. And the reason is that it is very connected to the Protestant Reformation. And I believe you'll see that for reasons I will share a little later.

[1 : 12] Philip Schaaf, who is a noted church historian, he wrote the following. The Reformation of the 16th century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history.

It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting from religion, it gave directly or indirectly a mighty impulse to every forward movement.

And made Protestantism the chief propelling force in the history of modern civilization. I want to read that again.

That's a bold statement. The Reformation of the 16th century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history.

It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting with religion, it gave directly or indirectly a mighty impulse to every forward movement.

[2 : 26] And made Protestantism the chief propelling force in the history of modern civilization. Now think about that. Think about the first sentence in particular.

The Reformation of the 16th century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history. That's a bold claim.

That's a bold claim. That's a very, very bold claim to make. And when you think about that, I think we have to first ask ourselves, okay, it's bold, but is it true?

Is it true that next to the introduction of Christianity, the Reformation is the greatest event in history? And again, this is not somebody in a corner talking out of his head. This is a noted church historian who would be widely respected around the world.

[3 : 28] And this is assessment of the Reformation. Now, if this is not true, it really doesn't matter that today, few churches in this country and around the world have even paused to recognize that something significant happened 500 years ago come Tuesday.

But if it is true, if it is true, if what Philip Schaaf says is true, it is absolutely scandalous.

It is mind-boggling that only very small sections of the church and even smaller sections of society in this country and around the world are even aware of the Protestant Reformation, that it took place some 500 years ago, and even fewer who would be aware of what it produced, what it brought to us.

I want to submit to you this morning that I agree with Philip Schaaf. I agree with him that the Reformation is the greatest event in history next to the introduction of Christianity.

And before the sermon is done, I believe you will see why. I believe you will see why it is that this statement is true.

[5 : 03] I want to begin this morning by giving some context for this statement of Philip Schaaf about why the Reformation is the greatest event in history next to the introduction of Christianity.

There are a lot of Christians who actually don't think much about how the gospel came to us. They kind of think that the gospel just came from Jesus Christ and dropped right in our laps. But it didn't. Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus came to this earth and while he had many followers, he selected 12 men. He appointed them as apostles and they co-labored with him for some three years.

And after his death and resurrection and ascension, Jesus left his entire mission in the hands of 11 men and a band of, a small band of faithful followers.

They started in Jerusalem and they faithfully preached repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. And churches were established.

[6 : 18] And the New Testament scriptures were written. As the church expanded throughout the Roman Empire, both politics and secular humanism invaded and influenced the church.

For most of its early years, the church of Jesus Christ was persecuted. They were marginalized. They were first persecuted by the Jews and they were persecuted by the Romans.

And life was difficult. But the church thrived in the midst of that. But all that changed when a Roman emperor by the name of Constantine came to claim that he had converted to Christianity.

Constantine was the first and last emperor who bestowed privileges on Christians. And starting in the year 312, 312, there began a toleration at the institution of Constantine.

Laws were passed. And churches and Christians began to be tolerated. And it actually became a privilege to be a Christian. And there were positive and negative results.

[7 : 38] The first positive result was that Christians got a reprieve from many, many decades. Centuries, actually, of persecution. They could now express their faith.

They could live out their faith without fear. In addition, with a quote-unquote Christian emperor, many of the values of Christianity began to shape the Roman Empire, institutions in Rome, and life in general.

It was generally positive because there was a decrease in paganism. There was a higher value placed on human life. There was the removal of superstition.

But on the negative side, the Christianizing efforts of Constantine resulted in many people joining the church just nominally.

Because it was the in thing to do. It was a vogue thing to do. It was now a status thing, a privilege thing to become a part of the church. But they became a part without conversion. And so the church began to change.

[8 : 43] The church became institutionalized. And actually began to follow the leadership structure of the Roman Empire as opposed to the very simple structure that we find in Scripture.

So the church became more hierarchical. More political. Because it was being influenced. By Rome. The ease of life that existed.

The commingling of believers and unbelievers also saw a decline in the morals of the church. In the spiritual life of the church. And it also resulted in a lot of strife.

A lot of divisions in the church between those who were truly converted and those who were not. Further negative of the decisions of Constantine.

Constantine. Was that he came to play a very prominent role in the life of the church. And it began this practice of the union between the church and the state.

[9 : 51] And so this period of tolerance that we saw from Constantine also brought about church buildings.

And it resulted in the church moving away from being a vital organism to being more of an organization. It moved away from men being humble leaders to men being lords over the people of God.

And while many, in many respects, the Christianization of the Roman Empire can be seen as a defeat at the hands of Christians, that they influenced the Roman Empire so much that they kind of defeated it.

Truth be told, the Roman Empire defeated the church in many respects, except for the faithful remnant that did not come under its influence.

But largely, it influenced the church. And that's how we actually came to have the Roman church or the Roman Catholic church, because it was so pervasive in the church.

[11 : 04] Well, after the tolerance of Christians that Constantine started in the year 312, over a period of about 200 years, the church began to descend into deep and increasing darkness and

corruption over a period of some 200 years.

The historical period that would mark the dark ages, this context of the Protestant Reformation, is generally considered to be between the year 500 and 1500.

So roughly about a thousand years of just increasing darkness in the church, where the church moved away from its moorings in Scripture.

Leadership declined. There was no longer humble episcopacy. It became a powerful monarchy, a pope. The episcopacy was a plurality of men who took responsibility for the care of God's people. But in the pope, leadership was consolidated. And the pope became a person who was elevated above everyone and everything and could not be questioned.

[12:21] And it began with a false teaching by a pope by the name of Leo, Leo the Great. He was pope from 440 through 461.

Leo preached a sermon in which he laid out what he claimed to be the basis for authority of the pope. And he reasoned that Peter was the bishop in Rome and Peter was given the keys to the kingdom.

And Peter was also over all the apostles. And drawing on Roman law and how property was devolved or how people inherited property, he said, well, when Peter died, Peter's keys and his authority over all the other apostles devolved or went down.

And it was inherited by the bishop who took his place or the pope who succeeded him. And this spun this theory of succession that the pope who succeeds the previous pope gets the keys and he has the keys to the kingdom.

And this grew and grew over time as they embellished it and added more onto it. So much so that the pope actually became where he declared himself even over the political leaders, beginning a practice of installing them and just controlling them in so many different ways.

[13:55] The pope had unbridled authority. He considered himself to be the guardian of salvation. And the papacy developed into a fortress of corruption and wickedness that was unparalleled in church history.

During the Dark Ages, there was moral corruption in the church. There was widespread and alarming, scandalous immorality among priests.

It was blatant. It was open among the popes and the other church offices. Although the official position was that the priests could not marry, popes and priests practiced concubinage, which is the practice of having informal wives for the sole purpose of sexual relations.

For example, there was one pope, Pope Alexander VI. He was pope between 1492 and 1506. He had seven children by four mistresses.

And it said of him that he was enslaved to worldly pleasures. As an example of how widespread corruption and sexual morality was in the church, in 1414, there was a church council held in the city of Constance in Germany.

[15:23] And it was a major issue that had arisen in the church. We have three men who were claiming to be pope, fighting against one another, and each one would not relent saying that they were the pope just because of all the power that it represented.

It was so worldly and so politically corrupt that they were contending with each other, claiming that they were pope. Well, the Council of Constance is considered to have been one of the most impressive councils in the history of the church.

Some 12,400 people attended, including three popes, 33 cardinals, 47 archbishops, 145 bishops, 93 suffragan bishops, 132 abbots, 155 priors, 5,000 spiritual lords.

This is the hierarchy that they established just to have their spiritual empire. 132 abbots, 155 priors, 5,000 lords, 29 dukes, 32 princes, 141 counts, 71 barons, 1,500 knights, and 217 doctors of theology.

And do you know who else came to the town of Constance? An estimated 1,500 prostitutes, pointing to the immorality and the hypocrisy of many priests, whose vows of celibacy were mere words.

[17:02] But not only was there moral corruption, there was theological corruption leading up to the Reformation. Theological corruption that undermined the true gospel.

It was taught that the church forgives original sin through baptism. And it forgives ongoing sins through repentance or through confession and through penance.

Eventually, the church became to be seen as the repository of God's grace on earth, entrusted with dispensing grace to people.

And salvation became a process of our cooperation with God, and not, as Scripture teaches, a monogistic, singular work by Him.

It was taught that justification came about because one had actually become righteous, not imputed righteousness, but imparted righteousness, that one in and of himself became righteous, and that's the way God would justify you.

[18 : 12] And salvation was to be found with cooperating with God and doing one's very best. And this cooperation came through the sacramental system, through worshiping saints and even worshiping relics.

The church had this practice of, a lot of it was superstition, where they would say this piece of wood was the part of the manger, and people would go and they would worship it, or they would say this tooth, this is Peter's tooth, and people would worship that.

This is a strand of Mary's hair, and they had all these relics in these different locations where people would make pilgrimages to go and see these particular things.

But the major factor that contributed to the theological corruption in the church was that the Bible was in Latin. And the masses of the church, or the services of the church, they were in Latin as well, and only the priests and perhaps a few other high-ranking officials spoke Latin.

And then there was the practice of buying and selling indulgences to pay for the penalty of sin. This practice was based, again, on the false teaching that during their earthly lives, the saints had a lot of merit, and this merit was stored up in the church's bank, and so people could pay money, and they could get these merits to go against their demerits, and they would spend less time in purgatory.

[19 : 51] And then they even began to allow you to buy the indulgences for other people. You could buy it for dead loved ones who had gone before.

And depending on how much sin you have, depending on the amount of indulgences that you need. But this really accelerated by a man by the name of John Ketzal.

He was the most famous seller of indulgences. And he largely sold these indulgences to the building of St. Peter's Basilica, because they had run out of money.

And Ketzal went further than the church was teaching, and he taught that as soon as people paid money, as soon as people paid their indulgence money on behalf of their dead, departed loved ones, their souls would leave purgatory and go straight to heaven.

So no longer waiting to be purged, but they would go straight to heaven. And he's credited with this statement, as soon as the gold in the casket, that's the money box, rains, the rescued soul to heaven springs.

[21 : 03] And again, it was this practice of Ketzal, more than anything else, that caused Luther to nail his 95 theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg.

And the title of his thesis actually was called The Disputation of Dr. Martin Luther on the Power and the Efficacy of Indulgences.

Luther nailed his 95 theses about indulgences on the door of the church as a friendly invitation to have a discussion, have a debate with the faculty to talk about this practice of indulgences.

But in the providence of God, instead of starting a debate, it began the Protestant Reformation. And so it was that historical setting from which the Reformation came.

And men like Luther protested the abuse of the church, the theological errors of the church, the immorality of the clergy.

[22 : 14] And by their efforts and through God's grace, the reforms that we have today are enjoyed. You're probably wondering now, what does all this have to do with the authority of Scripture?

Well, here's what it has to do with the authority of Scripture. The only reason that Luther was able to challenge the sale of indulgences is because he read his Bible.

It's the only reason that Luther was able to stand against what the church was teaching about a works-based salvation based on personal goodness.

He did it because he studied his Bible. And in particular, the passage of Scripture that was the apex moment for Luther was Romans 1.17.

He was studying in the book of Romans. Starting in verse 16, I'll read it. It says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

[23 : 29] For, this is 17 now, For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, for it is written that just shall live by faith.

Luther came across this verse and he saw for the first time that the righteousness of God that he offers in the gospel is by faith and not by works.

And you have to appreciate what this meant to Luther because Luther had done so much trying to earn his own salvation. And now he comes across this Scripture that says, It is not by your works. It is not by your own righteous work. It is by faith. This righteousness is by faith. And Luther, in response to this, would say, this is what he said, When I discovered that, I was born again of the Holy Ghost.

And the doors of paradise swung open and I walked through. Luther rediscovered the gospel by reading his Bible.

[24 : 45] Now here's why what Philip Schaaf said is true. It was only through the reading of his Bible that Luther discovered the most important thing in the Bible.

Actually, the message of the Bible. Luther discovered the gospel in the Bible. Because the Scriptures had been lost and because the Scripture had been lost, the gospel had been lost.

And since the gospel had been lost, what was started in Christianity ceased to be for most people who existed except for just a faithful remnant, a faithful remnant who continued to be faithful and true to the gospel.

For the masses, by and large, the gospel had been lost. And why Schaaf's statement is true is that the Reformation, you can think about it humanly speaking, certainly God was over all of that, but the Reformation brought about a recovery of the gospel.

And that it is in that respect that what Schaaf says is true. It is the greatest event in history.

Because what was recovered was the heart of Christianity, the gospel itself.

[26 : 11] And brothers and sisters, the gospel is the only essential news in the universe. It is the only essential news because it is the news by which God reconciles sinners to himself.

Undeserving sinners who deserve wrath, they hear that a gracious God, through the death of his son, reconciles sinners who place their faith in his son.

So the reformers like Luther and Calvin were essentially calling the Roman church back to the Bible, back to scripture, saying scripture, not the Pope, not tradition, not the councils, or anything else, is our ultimate authority.

Our ultimate authority is in scripture. And so it is no wonder that the primary sola is sola scriptura because that is where we get to see the other parts of the gospel.

So I think there are two statements that we can make, two statements that really cannot be disputed. And the first is this, ignoring and disobeying scripture caused the church to descend into spiritual darkness and moral decay.

[27 : 36] Ignoring and disobeying scripture caused the church to descend in spiritual darkness and moral decay. It was the neglect and the rejection of scripture that produced the conditions that required a reformation.

There were people sitting in churches and they would be hearing things in Latin, but they couldn't read their Bibles and they didn't understand what was going on and the priest would be telling them things that were contrary to scripture, but they didn't know.

And the fact is, when the church lost the scripture, the church lost the gospel. And when we lose the gospel, we really lose everything. The second statement is this, embracing and obeying scripture lifted the church out of darkness and moral decay.

So it was the neglect of scripture that brought about the conditions that required a reformation and it was the presence of scripture that brought about the reformation.

The reformers cared for scripture. They accepted scripture as the word of God, as their supreme source of authority and it fueled them and it fueled the reformation.

[28 : 55] Luther knew all too well that people in the churches in Germany in particular did not have access to the Bible because it was in Latin and most people didn't read or speak Latin.

And so one of his priorities was to translate the scriptures into the German language. Five years later, in the year 1522, Luther produced his German New Testament.

And then 12 years after that, in 1520, in 1534, sorry, he published his complete Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Apocrypha in German.

And this had to do as well with the conviction that Luther had that not only the Pope had the spiritual right to read scripture and interpret scripture, Luther believed in the priesthood of all believers and he believed that the average common Christian, that every single believer was a priest before God and had the ability and the right to read and understand scripture.

scripture. So here's my burden for us this morning. My burden for us this morning on this 500th anniversary of the Reformation is that we have a relentless commitment to the authority of scripture because brothers and sisters, this was the issue.

[30 : 31] This is the reason the church descended and remained in darkness for all of those years because scripture was lost. I mean, scripture is lost, the gospel in a matter of time will also be lost.

And so for the next few moments, I want to address us and it's going to be just for the next few moments. I want to address us from God's word on the authority of scripture.

So please turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3. We're going to look at two verses, verses 16 and 17.

2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 16 and 17. 17. Please follow along as I read.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[31 : 48] Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your word this morning. that I pray that you would by the power of your Holy Spirit convince and convict our hearts about the authority of scripture.

I pray, Lord, that you would lift these words off the pages of scripture and brand them on our consciences and cause us to be persuaded that this word is indeed your word.

Father, I pray that you would cause your divine intent for inspiring the apostle Peter to call to write these words. Lord, may the intent that you had in mind be for the profit of our souls this morning as we consider the authority of your word.

In Jesus' name, amen. The background of these words is the apostle Paul was soon to be beheaded and the falling away that he had told Timothy would come.

He warned him that there would be a falling away. This falling away had already started. The apostle Paul would soon be beheaded and he is saying to Timothy, Timothy, you need to continue to be steadfast.

[33 : 32] And above all, he urged Timothy to hold on to the scripture and to be faithful to the scripture. And in verse 16, he tells him why.

He gives him two reasons why he is to hold on to scripture and to be faithful to scripture. And they are because of the origin of scripture and because of the purpose of scripture.

Those are the two reasons that Paul lays out for Timothy in verse 16 as he calls him to be faithful, as he calls him to be steadfast.

He calls him to do so because of the origin of scripture and because of the purpose of scripture.

And brothers and sisters, the reasons that Paul gave to Timothy to hold on to scripture in his day are the reasons for us to hold on to scripture in our day.

Let's consider the first reason. The first reason, the origin of scripture. In the very first clause of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy 3, 16, Paul gives Timothy and us the reason that we must believe all scripture.

[34 : 51] Notice what he says. He says, all scripture is breathed out by God. All scripture is breathed out by God. This is graphic language to communicate to us the importance that all the words of scripture, this very important truth, all the words of scripture have their source and their origin in God.

All the words of scripture have their source and their origin in God. Paul coined this word. One of the commentators I was reading says that the only place that they were able to find this in terms of a literary occurrence, this word that Paul uses for breathed out is here in his letter, not found in any other part of the Bible, not found in texts outside of the Bible.

He coined this word to say God breathed out scripture. It is a very essential part of himself. God breathed out scripture.

What he's doing is he's showing that God is the divine author of scripture. And the implication of that is since God is the divine author of scripture, scripture carries God's full weight and full authority.

Yes, God used men to write scripture, but God himself is the divine author of scripture. all scripture is breathed out by God. Notice that it doesn't just say scripture is breathed out by God.

[36 : 30] It says all scripture is breathed out by God. And I think the point should be clear for us. We don't have the luxury or the privilege of being able to pick and choose what scriptures we want to believe, what we like, what we don't like.

No, all scripture is breathed out by God, not just some scripture. It all has its origin in God, so we must see all of it as authoritative.

Theologian and seminary professor Wayne Grudem defines the authority of scripture in this way. Listen to what he says. He says the authority of scripture means that all of the words of scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of God is to disbelieve or disobey God.

I'll read that again. The authority of scripture means that all of the words in scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of God is to disbelieve or disobey God. That is a very sober definition of the authority of scripture. God's word is an extension of himself and therefore to reject God's word is to reject God himself.

[38 : 05] To esteem God's word is to esteem God himself. The Roman Catholic Church descended into darkness and mysticism because scripture was not its sole authority.

They saw authority in the traditions of the church fathers. They saw authority in the Pope and they just saw scripture as another authority and they saw themselves over scripture, not under scripture. And so scripture was not the ultimate authority in the Roman Catholic Church. church. It was only an authority and therein was the danger. And here's what's sad.

Nothing has changed. And here's part of the dilemma of the Roman Catholic Church. Part of the dilemma of the Roman Catholic Church is their own teaching teaches that they can't be wrong.

The Pope can't be wrong. And therefore all the bulls that and that just means an official a bull is an official papal document that the that the popes would issue from time to time.

[39 : 26] And some of these bulls they would be enunciating doctrinal positions of the church. filled with error by their own teaching prevents them from going back and changing it and saying we were wrong because if they do that then people say well if you would be wrong in that then maybe you're wrong in something else you're going to tell me.

So they have to save face and are refusing to change anything. So all of these teachings there was a council in response to the Reformation called the Council of Trent.

and what the Roman Catholic Church did in that council over a number of years, many many sessions and they would address different aspects of the Reformation, they cemented and they reaffirmed those doctrines that the reformers were fighting against.

And they would still hold that scripture is not the ultimate and supreme authority, the singular authority in the church.

But I want to ask you this morning, what's your response? What's your response to the authority of scripture? Do you submit yourself to God's word and bring yourself under it?

[40 : 49] Or do you sit as a judge over God's word and you pick and choose what you like and what you don't like? See, part of the attitude of the authority of scripture is this, even before we read God's word, in terms of knowing all that it has to say, just hearing and understanding that this is God's word, that he has breathed it out, it should posture us to believe what is in scripture.

We go to scripture to believe it, not to contend with it, not to reject it. Yes, we want to understand it, but our lack of understanding is no basis, no reason to reject it.

And if we truly believe that scripture is God's authoritative, breathed out word to us, there's only one logical response. The logical response is we submit to it.

Brothers and sisters, it matters not what we say. What matters is whether we bring ourselves under the submission of the word of God. And we recognize it to be his word.

And we recognize, as Grudem says, it is an extension of who he is. And to reject it is to reject him. To disobey it is to disobey him.

[42 : 12] And the scriptures, you know, the scriptures are lost just a little bit at a time. You don't just wholesale wake up one day and reject the scriptures. No, it's just a little here and a little there, a verse I don't like there, and a verse I don't like here.

And sooner or later we have a very thin Bible with a lot of holes in it. But Paul says to Timothy, all scripture has its origin in God, and so we must hold on to scripture as God's authoritative word.

That's the first reason we need to hold on to scripture, because of its origin. The second reason we need to hold on to scripture is its purpose, the purpose of scripture. scripture. We need to hold on to scripture because of the purpose for which God gave it.

Notice again what Paul says in verse 16. All scriptures breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

we're told that God gave us the scripture for our profit. He gave it to us as a benefit, as a gift, as something that will do us good.

[43 : 34] When we embrace it, we receive it, we profit. When we reject it, we don't. We lose. And Paul tells us that scripture is profitable for us in four particular ways.

And we can actually group them into two categories. to teach us what to believe and to teach us how to behave.

John Starr puts it this way. He says, it is to guide both our creed and our conduct. That's what Paul is saying in this particular verse.

He says, first, scripture teaches. It teaches us what to believe. He says it's profitable for teaching. It instructs us how we are able to have sound doctrine, how we're able to have our feet rooted and grounded on the word of God and the truth of the word of God.

[44 : 41] Scripture teaches. second, he tells us that it's for reproof or reproving or for rebuking. And this reproof or this rebuking, this adjusting has to do with wrong beliefs and wrong ideas.

When we are getting doctrine right, the scripture will correct us. Scripture will say, no, that's not the right understanding. This is the right understanding. Scripture can correct unsound and bad teaching.

And see, this is why so many people sit in churches or they sit in front of a television and they listen to things they ought not listen to.

Because they're not allowing scripture to function in their lives to refute that and to reject the bad doctrine that they're actually hearing.

I remember a number of years ago, this comes to mind as I think about all that's going on in Roman Catholicism because we see a lot of these things warmed over and presented to us again.

[45 : 56] I remember a number of years ago, I can't remember where I was, but I was watching, I had to have been at someone's house because we don't have television like that, and I was watching something on TBN, they were having some telethon thing, and Paul Crouch, who is now dead, was, somebody said, I know there's someone, some of you have lost loved ones, loved ones who need to know the Lord, and they're away from the Lord, you've been praying for them, send a seed, send a seed, sow a seed for their salvation, and I'm thinking, that's buying and selling, that is what the reformers, that kind of superstition was what the reformers protested against, but here's what I can say, although I don't have any way of knowing this for sure, I have no doubt in my mind that many people believed it and they sent money, believing if I send money, my son or my daughter or my husband is going to be saved, scripture refutes that, corrects that bad kind of doctrine.

He goes on, he says that it's also profitable for correction and this word for correction in the original language has more to do with conduct.

It means to set something straight, set something straight that was crooked. It means to walk like in a straight line and so this speaks about conduct, how scripture actually will correct us when we are going astray, when we have incorporated into our thinking ways and means that begin to live themselves out in how we live, scripture will correct us and say, no, this is the way, this is the way you need to do that, this is what you need to do in that situation.

Scripture gives us a straight path. And then fourth, Paul says that it's for training in righteousness. Scripture trains us how we are to live, trains us how we are to conduct ourselves.

It shows us what it looks like to follow Jesus Christ. And then verse 17, Paul talks about, in a more direct manner to Timothy and to ministers, when he says that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[48 : 33] But brothers and sisters, this is true for anyone who would take heed to these words.

Seeing scripture as authoritative, seeing scripture as profitable, and receiving it as such, that we will have the same benefit of this kind of equipping, this preparation to do good work.

This preparation to do good work. And so I want to ask you this morning, do you value the purpose of scripture? And maybe that's not a question to answer as much as it is a question to evaluate your practice.

Does your practice show a value being placed on scripture and the profit of scripture, the benefit of scripture in our lives, that your practice will show that you are spending time in God's word regularly?

That God's word is not being neglected or put to the side, that you are demonstrating your belief that scripture is profitable because of the value that you place on it, the time that you spend in it, in your daily life.

God's love is not going to be going to be in it. Now I imagine that some of the things that given this priority to scripture could be the same thing that some Muslim could give to a protege and telling him to pay attention to the Quran and really to be faithful to the Quran.

[50 : 15] But here's the difference between some Muslim cleric calling adherence to the Muslim faith to study the Quran versus the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit calling us to give attention to God's authoritative word and the prophet that is in it.

Here's the difference. difference is what Paul says in verse 15. Paul tells us that in the scriptures is contained God's salvation.

Notice how he says it to Timothy. He says, from a child you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, this is why you must give this kind of care to God's word. Seeing it as authoritative. Seeing it as profitable. Embracing the purpose for what God gave it to us for because contained in it is the very salvation of God.

The very salvation of God. God. God. I think there's something ironic about the day in which we live compared to the day in which Luther lived.

[51 : 48] In Luther's day, before the translation of the scriptures in the language of the people, where they had access to the scripture in their own language, before that, people didn't read their Bibles because they couldn't read their Bibles.

And before the printing press, when there could have been the publishing and the promulgation of scripture and the widespread dispersion of scripture, you just didn't have, even if you could read the Latin Bible, you just didn't have multiple copies of it where everyone could have their own copy. So in that day, people didn't read because they didn't have access to it, whether to the language or having a physical copy of it.

Today, we have access. Perhaps in this room, there are multiple copies of the scriptures in our homes. And now with electronic devices, multiple translations available at our fingertips.

But I think the issue today, the issue today is that though the language, the Bible is in our language, though we have access to it at our fingertips, though we can read, we don't read.

[53 : 16] And the effect is the same. The effect is no different. Having the Bible that we don't read is no different from having the Bible that we can't read or not having it at all.

And brothers and sisters, one of the ways that we demonstrate a belief in the authority of scripture, that this is God's word, this is God's word to me, is that we embrace it and we employ it in our lives. And we give ourselves to it. And when we open it, we come to the place where we are saying, I am hearing from God through his word. And we take God at his word, that his word is profitable for us. So that when we neglect it, we recognize that we're neglecting profit for our lives. I can tell you right now that perhaps this is true for all of us.

But I would say it's certainly true for most of us. There is some aspect of our lives where we're looking for answers, where we're looking for direction.

[54 : 43] Maybe we're looking for comfort. Maybe we're looking for encouragement. And you know where it's found? Right in this book. Right in this authoritative book that God has given to us.

This book that God watches over and somehow is able to bring to us what we need when we need it in terms of being able to hear from him. I continue to marvel at how God providentially uses the scripture that we are studying week by week, that we are memorizing week by week, to just be profit for my soul and no doubt for all of our souls together.

And so, brothers and sisters, I say to us, let us heed these words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, remembering that all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete and equipped for

every good work.

And let us renew today our commitment to the authority of scripture because it was this lack of commitment that caused the church to descend into darkness and decay.

And it was the commitment to this scripture that lifted the church out of that decay and that darkness and caused the light of the Reformation to shine upon the church for us to enjoy what we enjoy today.

[56 : 21] So may God help us to give his word the priority that it deserves in our lives. Let's pray.