

The 5 Solas – Scripture Alone

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Date: 04 October 2026

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[0:00] He started a Bible reading plan in January and is still going. Boom. Alright, I'm going to give you a book, a great book, called A Heart of Flame for God.

It's a reformed approach to spiritual formation. If you're tracking a lot of the books coming out right now, or a number of authors are coming out with books on spiritual formation. Very famous author, John Mark Comer, Practicing the Way would be like a, I don't know if it's top ten, but it's a very popular book.

So, you know, and there's things about spiritual formation we wouldn't agree with. And so this is a fabulous book on, like, what did the Reformers teach about reading the Bible, meditation on the Bible, and prayer.

So that's the Reformational Triad. And really, really great book. Maybe one of the best I read last year. So, give it up for Bekkahs to continue with their Bible reading plan.

Who is depressed from quitting their Bible reading plan? Maybe you wouldn't want to identify in that way.

[1:16] What do you have for me if I say that? That's exactly right, yes. I think that's part of the tension here, isn't it? Or, you know, or...

Yeah, how do I identify this person, you know? So who would, yeah, who's longing for growth in that area of their life? All right.

This book is called When I Don't Desire God. You know, Dr. Piper wrote Desiring God, Pleasures of God, a number of different books.

What you wouldn't know about him, he talks a lot about joy, is that he battles a lot of despondency, and self-pity, and depression.

And this book is really quite good. And I think particularly as a couple chapters on Bible reading, yeah, the worth of God's Word in the fight for joy, how to wield the Word in the fight for joy, the focus of prayer in the fight for joy, and the practice of prayer in the fight for joy.

[2:23] So just some really nice chapters. So when I don't desire God, definitely can... Pause. Oh, pause, yes. You raised your hand. Yes. All right.

Oh, really? No, he loves medicine. Well, yeah, I mean, it is... I'm behind in my Bible reading plan a couple days.

I actually forgot the paper when I went to the Philippines. So I was trying to figure out, trying to guess where I would be, so I'm behind a bit. And so it can be an area that's discouraging.

But my hope would be, as we get to the end of this class today, we would be awakened to the privilege of having our Bibles and opportunity to read and things like that.

So, all right, so you are in the five solos class. So you've got to pin your own class, and maybe you can get up and leave now. But if not, we're excited to dive in to the month of October.

[3:24] The church often, the Protestant church celebrates the Reformation. And the five solos are one of the many ways of summarizing what the Reformation accomplished.

Now, the Reformers didn't actually teach five solos, similar to the five points of Calvinism. They were developed later. Some say Wikipedia, in fact, says the five solos was not codified or gathered together in that form until 1936.

I don't know if that's right, but Wikipedia, give it up. So these five solos are sola scriptura, which just means scripture alone. One of these rare moments we pull out Latin.

Solus Christus, which means Christ alone. Sola fide, which means faith alone. Sola gracia, which means grace alone. And soli deo gloria, glory to God alone.

Now, when I was in the Philippines last week, they said they add a six sola. Sola rice, rice alone. I think all of my family would hardly agree with all six solos.

[4:34] But while the Reformers didn't teach these, these five solos do capture the Reformation. And capture so much of what the Reformation sought to accomplish and sought to define.

Many have said that the central doctrine of the Reformation was justification by faith alone. So Martin Luther famously said, justification is the article upon which the church stands or falls. So justification by faith alone, this argument that we're justified by faith, declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ.

And the church standard falls on it because it is the core of the gospel message that we're trying to preserve. Now, sola fide, and I have this in your little outline.

People say sola fide or faith alone is the material principle of the Reformation. So that's what the Reformation is all about. That's the central matter. The why of the Reformation.

[5:36] And sola scriptura is the formal principle of the Reformation. The place where sola fide was rediscovered. That's the what of the Reformation.

The confidence that sola fide is true and right based on the witness of Scripture alone. Someone said sola fide is the precious jewel of the Reformation. Justification by faith alone is the precious jewel of the Reformation.

Whereas Scripture alone is the safe that protects it. And I think that's a helpful way of thinking about it. The church was trying to rediscover this precious jewel.

And then sola scriptura is the safe that protects it. And so the Reformation, you know, in many ways is a story of recovering the authority of Scripture.

An old historian, G.R. Elton, says, If there's a single thread running through the whole story of the Reformation, it is the explosive and renovating and often disintegrating effect of the Bible.

[6:41] I love that. Explosive, renovating, often disintegrating effect of the Bible. The story of the Reformation is a story of people recovering the Word of God as our supreme and final authority and the rule of faith and life.

One man has said, The Bible, the Bible, only I say is the religion of the Protestants. More recently, Carl Trueman has said, The Reformation was a movement of words.

And so if you know a bit of the history, what was going on is the Reformation coincided with the printing press. And, you know, the translation of the Bible and the articulation of these doctrines suddenly just started exploding.

So it really was a movement of words getting out. But what did the Scripture, or what did the Reformers teach about Scripture? And what do we mean by Scripture alone?

That's what we're going to talk about this morning. So I broke this out three points per usual. The first is the historical development of Scripture alone. So how did this develop?

[7:45] And what is the historical development? Point A underneath that, the Lipsy debate. Any discussion of the Reformation usually begins with Martin Luther.

And as Daniel promoted this class several weeks ago, he talked about the monk with a mallet and what he nailed on the castle doors of Wittenberg. The principle of sola scriptura, or the supreme authority of the Bible, is believed to have been first discovered or at least articulated in its present form by Martin Luther.

Luther. On October 31st, 1517, in accordance with standard protocol for announcing or calling forth a debate, Luther nailed 95 theses against the sale of indulgences to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany, and began the Reformation.

There's so much we could talk about here. But two years later, Luther engaged in a debate with a leading Catholic theologian named John Echt. Now, Echt, whose name means, Echt means corner, stumped Luther.

Luther famously said he was boxed in a corner by a corner. So it's kind of ever the quotable Luther, and that's another example.

[9:05] Echt stumped Luther by accusing him of advocating certain teaching of John Huss. So John Huss would be what one of the guys like John Wycliffe would be like a pre-reformer or something like that, people that were pushing back in different ways against the Roman Catholic Church.

And so John Huss was condemned as a heretic. And so Luther was accused of advocating teachings of John Huss.

And at first, Luther rejected the accusation. So in the presence of this debate, he rejected the accusation. However, over lunch, he examined the records of the council of the church in which

Huss was condemned and found that he was advocating some of the same teachings as Huss. When the debate resumed after lunch, he said, I am a Hussite. Now, it's really crucial to see what's going on here. There's a crucial development in Luther's theology and understanding of Scripture because if he supported the teachings of Huss, I lost my place there, supported the teachings of Huss because he found them to be biblical, even though Huss was condemned by the church, then he was saying that the authority of the Bible was over the church and of a greater authority than the Pope.

The following year, Luther summarizes what he believes by quoting St. Augustine, or two years later. He said, I've learned to do only those works that are called Holy Scriptures, the honor of believing firmly that none of their writers have ever erred.

[10 : 55] So he came to realize that in that moment that the church can err, the popes, the councils can err, but Scripture cannot err. We have this quote in your outline where he concludes, Scripture alone is the true Lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth.

Carl Trueman concludes after this, while the result of the actual debate at Lipsig was somewhat equivocal, somewhat equal, Luther returned to Wittenberg as the clear champion of the new Reformation movement because this critical thing happened where he realized that the Word of God stands as the supreme authority over the church and over the life of the church and over any councils and popes and things like that.

Now, it's important to see at the outset of the Reformation that the goal of the Reformation was to reform. It wasn't a revolution. They did not see themselves as innovators.

Rather, even as Luther, when he identifies with Huss, he's seeing that he's about the purity of the church.

And it was a belief common to the Reformers that they had on their side, not only the Bible, but also the church fathers. And that can be somewhat misunderstood when you hear about the Reformation, as if Reformation was just a departure.

[12 : 33] What they would say is they were trying to recover what the church actually taught and the early church actually taught. And so that's kind of the first step towards understanding sola scriptura.

And then the next step really is the Diet of Worms. Two years later, Luther was summoned to the city of Worms in April 1521 to stand trial for his teaching with the threat of excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church.

It was there that Luther articulated this scripture alone doctrine in its more precise form.

And he said, famously, refusing to recant his teaching, he said, Unless I'm convinced by the testimony of scripture and by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the popes or in the councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves.

I am bound by the scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.

[13 : 46] I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. May God help me. Amen. So you see that, you know, the articulation. While he doesn't negate popes and councils, he doesn't trust in them alone.

So his conscience is held captive by the word of God. And so that's kind of the historical development. And we could break that out. You know, we could talk about the Swiss reformers with Zwingli.

We could talk about Calvin and and, you know, what he was doing in France. But but all of them kind of agree on this. And I think in many ways, Luther's story captures the historical development. So so the meaning of scripture alone. We have this for you. Scripture alone is infallible or without error. So how do we get that?

How do we get in fact, once you turn in your Bible to 2 Timothy 3. Scripture alone is infallible and without error.

[14 : 57] These these verses, 2 Timothy 3, 16 to 17 are just tremendous verses on the doctrine of scripture.

The ones that we all should know where to find in our Bible. You know, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for approved, for correction and for training in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. All scripture is breathed out by God. So some of you may have a translation that says all scripture is inspired by God.

I think this breathed out is capturing it better. What what the what the text is saying is literally expired by or expressed by God.

So this idea that what was in the mind of God is expressed to these human authors. And so scripture is inspired by God, not in the sense that the writers were inspired.

[16:08] You know, sometimes we use that word. I was inspired to write this song or inspired to go and talk to this person. This inspiration is different than that. Even though it was working through human authors, God was guaranteeing that what was written were the words of God.

And so scripture stands in a class by itself. Second Peter one. Actually, go and turn there to second Peter one. It should be just a few pages.

Ten or so. But how did this take place? And Peter articulates this very well. Second Timothy one twenty one.

Another good text on scripture to have at the ready. He says no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So that's capturing the doctrine of inspiration. This idea that God caused men to write the very words of God. Men spoke. And that means some they sounded like themselves.

[17:17] John writes like John with light and darkness and and these great contrasts. And Paul writes and sounds like Paul. And yet they spoke the very words of God.

And so scripture is and go and turn back to second Timothy three. Scripture is inspired by God. And so when we begin to talk about scripture alone and its infallibility, we talk first about its author, God alone.

Scripture is profitable. This idea that it's it never fails in what it accomplishes. You know, we see this in in Isaiah fifty five.

God sends out his word and God's word accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent. We see that all throughout the scriptures. Remember, even the very first words of the Bible are God spoke. And what did the word do? This word was massively powerful to accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. It was sent, creating the heavens and the earth. And so this runs through scripture.

[18:19] So scripture is inspired by God and infallible. That means never failing in what it was designed to accomplish. Unlike human words. Right.

We've all been failed by human words. Scripture, therefore, is the only sufficient authority. This idea that scripture is sufficient. And that's what's immediately underlined in second Timothy three.

Yes. Second Timothy three, breathed out by God, profitable for teaching. Reprove, correction and training that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This idea that it's scripture that equips us and empowers us. And it's completely sufficient to supply all that we need for the Christian life.

God has second Peter, Peter one. All things that pertain to life and godliness God has given to us. And so, too, we see that in scripture.

[19:20] And so the Belgic Confession summarizes this and says, We believe that this holy scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it.

I think that's a wonderful truth. And you see that date, 1561. So the 95 Theses, 1517, you see the development of this. Now, the Roman Catholic Church in that day would agree, and I guess in today's day as well, would agree that scripture is without error.

But the Roman Catholic Church would not believe scripture is the only authority without error. So you see this. And I quoted several, put in several Catholic documents in here for you.

But in 1546, Council of Trent, after the Reformation, it said, The council accepts and venerates with a like feeling of piety and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testament, since the one God is the author of both, as well as the traditions concerning both faith and conduct, either spoken by Christ or dictated by the Holy Spirit, which have been preserved in unbroken sequence in the Catholic Church.

So you see the response to the Reformation, the response to this articulation of scripture being the supreme and final authority in the Catholic response is an upholding of tradition.

[20:48] I'll have a little bit more to say about that. But this idea that alongside scripture as being an infallible God, tradition, and that's not tradition like, you know, grandma always serves sweet potatoes with Thanksgiving meal or something like that.

It's this idea that the scripture needs the faithful teaching of the church to be upheld as an infallible God for interpreting it.

That's what they mean by tradition. And they continue to uphold that. You see the same thing in Second Vatican Council in 1965. And I'm not going to read that quote, but it's a little bit more nuanced, but it's saying essentially the same thing.

And then the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1995, I do want to read that if you'll look there, says the church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone.

But scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence. And so there you kind of see the nub of the matter. Is it scripture and tradition?

[21:53] Or is it scripture alone? And what we would argue is that scripture alone is to be the supreme and final authority and the rule of faith and life. Or, as one author has put it, scripture alone is a statement that the church can err, but scripture cannot.

I find that very helpful. The church can err. The church, its leaders, its teachers, its councils can err, but scripture cannot err.

And I'd hope to kind of read this whole statement. I don't know that we have time to do it. But from our statement of faith, if you look down there, I have quoted two big blocks on scripture.

But look there. I'll read a few sentences. He says, or we write, All of scripture is breathed out by God, being accurately delivered through various human authors by the inspiration and sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit.

We therefore receive the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments as the perfect, infallible, and authoritative God. With the fullness of revelation given in Christ and his complete redemptive work, no new normative revelation will or need be given until Christ returns.

[23:06] Look down there, the second one, under the attributes. Believers live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The word of God is therefore necessary and wholly sufficient for knowing the Father's love in Christ, experiencing his glorious plan of redemption, and being instructed in the way of a fruitful and godly life.

The word of God is clear, and everything we need to know, love, and fellowship with God can be plainly understood through the ordinary means without appeal to any human authority. This idea, that was a wonderful article.

What you're seeing in that statement is arguing the necessity of scripture, the sufficiency of scripture, the clarity of scripture. So that was a big point of the Reformation, this idea that scripture needs no human props.

Scripture shines in its own light. Very much a recovery of the Reformation that I don't really spend much time on today. Although not all scripture is equally plain, and I find that fascinating in 2 Peter 3, he says, Paul is hard to understand, you know, and all God's church said amen.

Although not all scripture is equally plain, when its intended meaning is understood, the fault lies not in the clarity of God's communication, but in the recipient. So what's that saying?

[24:25] Well, the church can err. Scripture alone is to be our supreme and final authority in the rule of faith and life. Scriptures must not be added to or taken away from, and all creeds, confessions, teachings, and prophecies are to be tested by the final authority of God's word.

But it's a helpful summary of the doctrine of scripture, very much in line with the Reformed tradition. And so scripture alone is infallible and without error, but point B, scripture alone does not mean the Bible is the only authority.

I think this is really critical. Some people assume they're affirming sola scriptura when they say no creed but the Bible. And that's very common to essentially articulate this idea, no creed, this idea that no statement about the Bible can be received except the Bible.

Some people can oppose unbiblical language, or maybe I should say non-biblical language, like the Trinity. I've heard someone said to my faith, I refuse to accept the doctrine of the Trinity because the Trinity is not in the Bible.

Or I refuse to accept the doctrine of the hypostatic union, which was developed in the third century to describe what is Jesus Christ. How do his divine nature and human nature coexist?

[25:51] It's very critical that you get that right. And the Bible doesn't tell us. And so we have to use non-biblical words, if we could say it like that.

Or church membership, you know, is another kind of non-biblical word. And so essentially, no creed but the Bible means we have to reject those things.

But the Reformers did not teach sola scriptura in this way. They didn't teach sola scriptura in such a way that it became solo scriptura.

They affirmed the authority of creed's confessions and teachings. And you saw that with Luther's statement, I do not trust in the Pope or in the councils alone.

It's very important. Sola scriptura was never meant, Scripture matters and nothing else does. When Luther defended his belief of sola scriptura, he cited the Bible as well as the Pope and earlier teachings of the church fathers.

[26 : 55] And so we stand in a line of people that rejoice in how God has worked in his providence to articulate these things alongside the Bible.

We don't put them on the same level as the Bible and the sense that the Bible is the supreme authority and the things that we test, everything we say about God. And yet we thank God and affirm the Nicene Creed and its articulation of the eternal generation of the Son and the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in one person, Jesus Christ.

We thank God and affirm the Chalcedonian Creed and its articulation of the distinction between the two natures of the Son. How are they together without being kind of mixed?

We thank God and affirm much of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Reformed Confessions. We thank God and affirm our own statement of faith. If you remember, well, some of you remember this, we passed this in the midst of COVID in 2020.

And it articulations doctrines distinct to us, Reformed theology and continuationist understanding of the Spirit's work, which we're studying right now as a church, and also doctrines specifically under attack right now.

[28 : 17] So it says some very clear things on gender, for instance. It says some very clear things on marriage. What is marriage? In fact, if you're at any of our ordination services that have happened in our church, one of the questions that is asked is, Do you sincerely declare before God that you believe all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith and that they fully agree with the Scriptures?

Do you own that statement as the statement and confession of your faith and you promise to teach and defend these doctrines in public and in private? What are we doing in that moment? Now, on the one hand, we're not saying we believe in these things more than the Bible, but we believe these things, insofar as they uphold the Bible, must be upheld.

And so this idea is a reason, you know, these confessions came about and are important alongside the Bible is they clarified what the Bible taught because no one came to the Nicaean, the Council of Nicaea, is saying they believed in something other than the Bible.

Right? It was everybody coming to find agreement about what the Bible taught. And so we as a church have a responsibility. So we are what we call a confessional church in the sense that our pastors hold to this confession, not over and above the Bible, but submitted to the Bible, and yet capturing what we believe.

So you could argue, I think, so this idea that Scripture is not the only authority. One author says that the Word of God is the magisterial authority and the tradition of the church is the ministerial authority.

[30 : 06] This idea that so long as it doesn't add to or take away from Scripture, the authority of the church has a ministerial authority to apply and guide and unpack and help the church live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

And so this ministerial authority is critical. Another way it's often put is that Scripture is the norming norm.

So Scripture is overall, it norms all norm. And the tradition is the norms that are normed. This idea that because the church can err, then we need the norming norm to continue to right our wrongs and lead us into greater conformity with the Word of God.

All right, so that kind of develops what is the meaning of Scripture alone. Point three, the application of Scripture alone. So, point A, the Word of God is to be central to corporate worship.

And the Reformation, this Reformation, this movement of words, as I said, led Protestants to strip the altars out of the churches in order to emphasize the finality of the work of Christ.

[31 : 40] No more sacrifices need to be offered. And the priority of the proclamation of the Word and the Gospel were made right before God through the Gospel alone. And the Proclamation of the

Word.

So instead of the altar, the pulpit was the center of the worship space. Instead of the sacrament, the sermon became central to corporate worship. We keep the Word of God written and preached central in our corporate worship.

So we begin with the Word of God, we conclude with the Word of God, and the Word of God is given its preeminent place and what are we trying to articulate by doing that?

You know, we're trying to articulate that we are a people underneath the Word of God. Continually trying to submit our lives to the Word of God. We are in the age of the ear, not in the age of the eye. So it can be very easy, though it wouldn't have been going on in the Reformational Church, to kind of jettison the authority of the Word for more fancy stuff, you know, for experience, or innovation, or spiritual gifting, or whatever it is.

[32 : 56] I mean, we want our services, and I hope it's true, to have a pretty plain aspect to them. We are people, we're gathered, not because of a lot of similarities, we're gathered because we want to hear the Word of God, we want our lives to be conformed by it, we want to be like Jesus, my food is to do the will of God.

And so, the first place in which the church, one author has said, Reformation starts, is the pulpit. Point B, down there, read and meditate on the Word of God personally.

So, in the Reformation, that conviction that the Bible is the supreme authority, it exploded into the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, same as, or into the common language.

Famously, Luther, on the way back from the Deode of Worms, was captured by allies, Frederick the Wise, and holed up in the Wartburg Castle where he began to translate the Bible into the German language.

It is believed that by the time of his death, there were half a million copies of Luther's Bible in Germany, which is amazing. And the clear drive is so that everyone could receive the authority of the Bible for themselves.

[34 : 08] Everyone could read the Bible for themselves. Did not need it to be brokered to them by teachers, but could read and understand it. One of the men who devoted his life to translating the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into English is a man named William Tyndale.

Famously, on one occasion in a dispute with someone about what he was doing, he said, if God spare my life before many years, I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more Scripture than you do.

You see what animated him and drove him. And it does, man, it shifts it's waking so much gratefulness to have this. I mean, how many copies of Scripture are in our households.

And yet, the vast majority of people throughout Christian history did not read the Scriptures because they heard them. You realize that? And numerous men gave their lives, literally, including Tyndale and others, to get the Scriptures into your hands.

And I forget what the number is, but in our English Bibles, it's something absurd, like 60% of our English Bibles are Tyndale's translation. So it's just pretty amazing what he did.

[35 : 25] Verses like, for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. That was Tyndale. And you memorized that. And he translated that.

That's amazing. It's still in your Bible. And so for Luther, this was no less true. He famously said, experience alone makes one a theologian.

Now, he is ever quotable and one of the fascinating things about Luther, it seemed, you know, they say he had no unarticulated thoughts. Now, you may have a friend like that who appears to not restrain any thoughts inside their head.

but that's what he's saying, that no unarticulated thoughts. And so one of the fascinating things about Luther studies is people that argue whether he really said something or they argue Luther against Luther and things like that.

But what does he mean by experience alone makes one a theologian? This idea, what he's talking about is that, not like experience in a real subjective sense, but that the Bible must be applied personally.

[36 : 28] That's what he was getting at. The Bible must be applied personally. That's what he advocated, he pushed for, he urged. All right, C, and ever the problem.

We're running out of time in these classes. C, interpret the word of God rightly along with the analogy of faith. In the Reformation, it was argued that the fundamental approach to biblical

interpretation is the analogy of faith.

So if scripture is the only unfallible, it is the only unfallible word from God, the way we ensure that we're interpreting scripture rightly is interpreting scripture with scripture.

That's the analogy of faith. And we have a quote down there by Luther, but this idea is that we want scripture to interpret scripture and that's how we ensure that we're not interpreting scripture and putting ourselves over and above scripture's teaching, if that makes sense.

And one of the ways we do this, I have four points there. We interpret scripture respectfully. So we interpret it with respect to all that scripture says about a point.

[37 : 36] And so we interpret the secondary in light of the primary, the obscure in light of the clear. That means our convictions about the abomination of desolation, you have some strong convictions about that, should be held differently than our convictions about substitutionary atonement.

Our convictions about the age of the earth should be held differently than our convictions about gender. Our convictions about the end times should be held differently than our convictions about the sovereignty of God.

So this idea, there's a proportionality to scripture and a respectiveness in the way we interpret scripture.

Interpreting scripture harmonistically, this idea is that we should interpret scripture because it's a single author, which is a big part of what the Reformation argued, we interpret scripture without pitting one part of scripture against another.

And you've all heard, like, the God of the Old Testament is the God of wrath, which I'm like, have you read the Old Testament lately? Do you know what happened with Noah, you know?

[38 : 47] Yes, God struck the earth, but God did not kill everyone. You know, God was merciful. He kept his covenant. And God in the New Testament is God of love.

Or we can pit Paul against Jesus. You know, Jesus was all about love. Paul was narrow-minded and, you know, whatever, something like that. And so we don't do that because we believe what scripture says about itself and we believe that there's unity and there's one author and so we assume that the error is in us.

If we see an issue with the way scripture lines up, we assume the error is in us, not in scripture.

Interpret scripture broadly. So this is the idea that you're looking across the whole of scripture.

And this is where in the last 50 years there's been a lot of work done here. This idea that scripture develops. Scripture is telling a story. I remember right after I became a Christian talking to one of Buddy's daughters, actually, and was hanging out and she was like, yeah, the exile was such a terrible time in the history of Israel.

I was like, yeah, the exile. What's the exile? You know? Didn't know what she was talking about.

The people were, just began reading the Bible, you know, they were kicked off the land and then God made all these promises to finish what he had done with them.

[40 : 09] Brought them back through Ezra and Nehemiah. This idea that scripture is developing a story. It's a story among this people, but it's also a story that includes prophecies and fulfillment.

Promises and answers. Includes types. So all these different things are pointing forward to Jesus Christ. So in many ways, it's right that we'd be more familiar and preach more from the New Testament because it's the fullness of scripture.

And yet, part of what we do is observe all that God's doing and broadly what's going on. And so, you know, when we interpret scripture broadly, we interpret things in light of the other.

You know? We understand why we don't obey certain Old Testament laws, like to wear two different cloths, which is condemned in the Old Testament.

Why we don't obey those things? Because these civil laws were fulfilled in Christ. And so, it's just critical to understand those things.

[41 : 20] It helps us understand. It protects us from plucking verses out of the Old Testament. I remember talking with someone who said they're having conflict with their child about tattoos. And I don't have any tattoos for the record.

But, you know, and they were going from Leviticus talking about you shouldn't tattoo your bodies like the pagan nations. And I said, you know, I don't really have an opinion on whether your daughter gets a tattoo, but I wouldn't use that verse.

Because I think that's pulling that verse out of context. And so, because in this 21st century, I don't think you can say only the pagans have tattoos.

And so, it's not what distinguishes us. And so, perhaps there are other verses to consider, but I'll leave that for your consideration. I'll interpret Scripture respectfully and not lay down anything there.

Fourthly, interpret Scripture Christocentrically. Interpret Scripture to see how it's fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Luther says beautifully here, Now, the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles were written for this very purpose.

[42 : 32] They want themselves to be our guides to direct us to the writings of the prophets and of Moses in the Old Testament so that we might see there read and see for ourselves how Christ is wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger.

That is how he is comprehended in the writings of the prophets. It is there that people like us should read and study, drill ourselves and see what Christ is, what purpose he has been given, how he was promised and how all of Scripture tends towards them.

Isn't that a beautiful statement? But it's capturing this idea that all of Scripture has a central figure, Jesus Christ. One author says every verse in Scripture is either predicting the work of Christ, preparing for the work of Christ, reflecting on the work of Christ, or resulting from the work of Christ. This is so critical. It helps us realize the Bible is not mainly about us. So the problem of like opening the Bible and pointing to a verse, you know, not only is that not a wise practice because you may get a condemnation for something going on in your life, you know, it's not a wise practice because it assumes the Bible is about you, about what you must do to be right with God, about who you should marry or whatever it is.

The Bible is mainly about Jesus Christ. That's what unites it together. And that's just amazing. Like, if you get that thought and get that reality and you see in all these different ways the burning bush and the pillar of fire and the cloud and all the substitutionary sacrifices, all these things, all the leaders of the Old Testament, you get this idea of how they're all pointing to Christ.

[44 : 23] You see Christ on every page. Stephen Charnock says, Is Christ not the subject to the whole Scripture? And like a golden oar runs through every vein of the mind.

He is the center wherein all the lines of Scripture meet. And we can open no part of it, but something of Christ strikes upon the mind. So, yeah, so fourthly, or D down there, apply the word thoroughly and continually.

Apply the word thoroughly and continually. It's here, I think, we have to beware of some dangers. We, as we apply the word, we beware of the danger of Biblicism.

I think it's this idea that, no creep of the Bible, this idea that we're, we're kind of opposed to any, any words that are added to explain what the Bible teaches.

That is not biblical practice, in my opinion. Beware of subjectivism. You know, this idea that whatever's true for you can be true for you, but it's not true for us.

[45 : 32] The Bible and the Reformers fought for objective, fixed meaning. Beware of individualism. Dismissal of the church and the authority of pastors to preach, govern, and lead because of the authority of the individual.

And we see that going on, you know, like, you know, you don't like the way I'm living while I'm taking my ball and I'm leaving. You know, essentially, the rise of the individual where the individual, as one author says, this is a reformation we might not get through or this is a revolution we might not get through because every person becomes, in effect, their own pope.

So it's one thing to deal with the popes of the Roman Catholic Church, but individualism says, my authority is over the Bible and we see that, you know.

Beware of disobedience and embracing lifestyles forbidden in Scripture because of this higher subjective authority. I put down there this little formula that I think's pretty, pretty right trying to capture how do we get this right?

Right understanding of the Scripture equal authority, the Word, plus interpretation along that analogy of faith and community, the study of the Word across the history of the Church.

[46 : 48] This idea that we just don't want so the Scripture to become something that divorces us from the history of Church. As you guys know, all know, whoever forgets history or neglects history, repeats it.

And so, we're trying to preserve what the Scripture says. And we want to respect the way Scripture has been interpreted over the history of the Church.

Even though we don't put it above the authority of Scripture, this history of interpretation is vital. You know, in fact, sometimes I have said to people, if you conclude something from Scripture that the vast majority of people throughout Christian history have not abandoned your conclusion.

You know, in many ways, if you just kind of push out the thought that I'm an inventor when I read the Scriptures, it'll serve you because you'll just think most often I want to read the study of Scripture in light of history instead of light of its interpretation.

interpretation. So, Sola Scripture. Yeah, I need to wrap up. But, I hope that's helpful and I hope that captures what's going on.

[48:01] Scripture alone next week we'll talk about Sola Fide, faith alone. Let me pray for us as we prepare our hearts to receive the Word of God. Father in Heaven, we thank You for this morning.

Thank You for the opportunity to gather together and to be with Your people. Thank You, Lord, that You have spoken and You have inspired these 66 books.

They're sufficient for all that we need for life and godliness. Thank You for all the men and women that have given their lives to translate and to uphold these Scriptures and to give us these Scriptures in our present form.

We worship You and praise You and we rejoice. We want to be men and women of the book and so, Lord, come and work in us. Cause us to love this book.

Open our eyes to see it more and more, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.