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# CELEBRATING REFORMATION

## *SCRIPTURE ALONE*

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on October 1, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

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The Protestant Reformation is quite unknown by many Protestants and Catholics today. Additionally, of those who do know anything of the divide, many are calling for reconciliation and reunification. What was the Protestant Reformation? Why did it happen? Why are there Protestants today? Should Christians today even care about these things? In today's message, we will begin a 5-part series addressing the formal cause of the Protestant Reformation. We will consider the doctrine of Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone), learning from past protests and confronting present presumptions.

### **2 TIMOTHY 3:12-4:5 (ESV)**

**3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

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.

**4:1** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

## THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY

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**Scripture Alone is God's perfect and sufficient word, necessarily expressed in the context of the local church.**

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

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- (1) THE REFORMATION PROTEST: PAST & PRESENT CONTRAST**
- (2) THE REFORMATION RENEWAL: SCRIPTURE IS PERFECT & SUFFICIENT**
- (3) THE REFORMATION TODAY: NECESSITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**
- (4) APPLICATION: WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THIS?**

## MESSAGE

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### **(1) THE REFORMATION PROTEST: PAST & PRESENT CONTRAST**

- **The Formal Cause of the Reformation**
  - The Material Cause was "*Sola Fide*"
    - Is Christ a sufficient Savior, or must I contribute to my justification?
    - Heidelberg Catechism: "*What is your only comfort in life and death?*"
      - "*That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. **He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood...***"<sup>1</sup>
- The Formal Cause was "*Sola Scriptura*"
  - Who says? Who has the authority to speak on such a thing?
    - Luther at the Diet of Worms April 17, 1521 (excommunicated January 3, 1521).
      - "*Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason— I do not accept the authority of popes and*

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<sup>1</sup> See the full Heidelberg Catechism here: <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/heidelberg-cat.html>

*councils*, for they have contradicted each other— my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. [Here I stand]. God help me. Amen.”<sup>2</sup>

- This is the formal cause of the Protestant Reformation, and that is why we begin here.
  
- **Reformers & Protestants on God’s *Perfect & Sufficient* Voice in Scripture**
  - Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)
    - “[Christians ought to be] *led by the Word* and Spirit of God... setting aside all [human teachings] and to *learn the doctrine of God from His own Word.*”
  - John Calvin (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536-1559)
    - “we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from him alone...*the Scriptures alone exist as the means by which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance...*”
  - Second London Confession (1689)
    - Of the Holy Scriptures
      - Perfect: “The Holy Scripture is *the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience...*”<sup>3</sup>
      - Sufficient: “The *whole counsel of God* concerning *all things necessary* for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is *either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture.*”

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<sup>2</sup> Bainton, Roland H.. Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Kindle Locations 2559-2561). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition. Bainton notes that “Here I stand” was inserted into the written record of the statement, but these words may not have been part of Luther’s actual response.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Second London Confession* here: <http://www.1689.com/confession.html#Ch.%201>

- Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)
  - Uses nearly the exact same language as the 2<sup>nd</sup> London.<sup>4</sup>
- The Baptist Faith & Message (1925, 1963, \*1998, and 2000)
  - The Scriptures
    - “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. [It] will remain to the end of the world...***the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.***”
- **Rome on God’s Perfect (not sufficient) Voice in Scripture**
  - Council of Trent (1545-1563)
    - Decree concerning Scripture & Tradition:
 

“this truth [the Word of God, particularly the Gospel] and discipline are contained in the written books, ***and the unwritten traditions*** which, received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself...have come down even unto us, ***transmitted as it were from hand to hand***; [we] ***receive and venerate with equal affection of piety, and reverence***, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament [***and***] ***the said traditions***...preserved by a ***continuous succession in the Catholic Church.***”

“...if anyone receive not, as sacred and canonical, [39 OT books, 27 NT books, and 7 apocryphal books] ...and knowingly and ***deliberately despise the traditions...let him be anathema.***”<sup>5</sup>

      - In other words, both the written Scriptures and the unwritten traditions have been handed down from one Christian generation to the next, and these are equally respected, honored, and obeyed.
      - Rejection of any part is equal to rejection of Christianity.

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<sup>4</sup> See the *Westminster Confession* here: [http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster\\_conf\\_of\\_faith.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html)

\* There was only a slight amendment in 1998, and not a full revision.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ecatholic2000.com/trent/untitled-11.shtml#\\_Toc385685487](http://www.ecatholic2000.com/trent/untitled-11.shtml#_Toc385685487)

- Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)
  - Statement: “*Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation*”<sup>6</sup>
    - “*it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.*”<sup>7</sup>
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992, and still used today)
  - The *Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church* cites the statement above from the *Dei Verbum*.<sup>8</sup>

Summary: We see that there is both a past and present contrast...

(Segue) But, *why* do Protestants believe *Scripture* is both *perfect* and *sufficient*?

## (2) THE REFORMATION RENEWAL: SCRIPTURE IS PERFECT & SUFFICIENT

“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*”

- **Perfect (v16)** “*All Scripture is God-breathed...*” (*theopneustos*)
  - 3 steps to conclusion
    1. *God is the ultimate author of Scripture*
      - Jesus said on several occasions, “*Have you not read what God said?*” (Matt. 22:31; Lk. 11:49).
      - When tempted in the wilderness, Jesus responded, “*It is written...*” appealing to divine authority (Luke 4:1-13).
      - Scripture is the result of prophetic/apostolic writers being “*carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Pet. 1:20-21).

<sup>6</sup> The *Dei Verbum* is the dogmatic statement from the Second Vatican Council with the official endorsement of Pope Paul VI in November of 1965. This statement, in its fullness, is a full reaffirmation of the errors of Rome at the Council of Trent (as well as additional errors promulgated).

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)

<sup>8</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pg. 31, section 82

## 2. *God is infallibly perfect*

- God's wisdom/knowledge is immeasurable (Rom. 11:33).
- God is the origin of wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 2:6).
- God never lies (Titus 1:2).
- It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).
- *"the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever"* (Is. 40:8).

3. Since Scripture is "God's word" (*theopneustos*), and since God is infallibly perfect, ***it must be that Scripture is infallibly perfect.***

- **Sufficient**

- 2 Points here:

### 1. *Scripture is the only infallible Word of God.*

- Roman Catholics will often argue that the passage here does not explicitly say, "*Scripture is the only 'God-breathed' word...*"
- The statement is indeed implicit, and not explicit.
- The burden of proof is on Rome...
  - Where is there another 'God-breathed' word mentioned in Scripture?
  - Where is this 'God-breathed' word preserved today?
  - Does any claim of infallibility stand against honest scrutiny?
- The written Word of God is the only infallible 'God-breathed' word claimed by the whole of Christendom throughout history.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> While one may present many and various claims of infallibility for popes or councils or the like, the assertion stands as a general statement regarding consistent orthodoxy measured over the centuries.

## 2. *Scripture itself claims sufficiency.*

- The whole point of this passage is Paul instructing Timothy about “[*living*] a *godly life in Christ Jesus*” (3:12).
- The “*sacred writings,*” are that “*which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*” (3:15).
- The Scriptures are “*profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*” (3:16).
- Exposure to the Scriptures makes “*the man of God... complete, equipped for every good work*” (3:17)
- The Scriptures are not only sufficient for *personal application*, but also for *pastoral application*.
  - “*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*” (4:1-2)

Summary: **The Scriptures are perfect and sufficient for Christian faith and practice...**

(Segue) *But this is not just a past issue.*

## **(3) THE REFORMATION TODAY: NECESSITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

- **Rome still teaches an alternate source**
  - As mentioned above, this is not merely a past division.
    - Rome claims today:
      - God’s Word is found in both Scripture and Tradition.
      - Tradition develops over time and may be unknown to Scripture or Church history.
      - The Church of Rome is the reliable interpreter of Scripture.

- **American Evangelicals often claim an alternate source**
  - ***Personal intuition***
    - “*God told me...*” or “*God spoke to my heart...*”
    - If we mean, “*God has most certainly commanded/said...*,” then we are claiming personal divine revelation.
    - If we mean, “*I believe God would want me to...*” and not “*God has most certainly commanded/said...*,” then we are not claiming too much, but we are misspeaking.
  - ***Personal ignorance***
    - If one does not know what God’s word says, then one can only believe and act based on another authority.
      - Feelings, circumstance, experience, personal preference, etc.
        - This shows itself in a host of ways:
          - Are you ready to share the Gospel message with someone? What passages would you cite?
          - What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? What verses back up what you would say?
          - What does God expect from all Christians? How do you know?
          - What does baptism mean? What is church membership? What should a church do? What responsibility do you have to your neighbor? How does Christ command you to deal with your sin? What about the sin of others?
- **The Local Church is our tether**
  - **3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
  - 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.

- The Local Church acquaints one another with the sacred writings.
  - The Local Church knows one another.
  - The Local Church firms up belief through learning.
- 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 Local Church teaches one another.
  - The Local Church reproves (scolds or rebukes) one another.
  - The Local Church corrects one another.
  - The Local Church trains one another in righteousness.
  - The Local Church equips one another for good work.
    - ALL ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE!
- 4:1 *I charge you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 *preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; *reprove*, *rebuke*, and *exhort*, with complete *patience* and *teaching*.
- The Local Church places pastors in leadership who will preach the word, knowing that Christ Himself will judge every word.
  - The Local Church enjoys pastoral instruction, including rebuke and exhortation (command), as the pastors patiently disciple.
- 3 For the time is coming when *people will not endure sound teaching*, but having itching ears *they will accumulate for themselves* teachers to *suit their own passions*, 4 and will *turn away from listening to the truth* and wander off into myths.
- The Local Church includes some people who will not want such Scripture-based discipline and instruction and pleading.
- 5 As for you, *always be sober-minded*, endure *suffering*, do the *work* of an evangelist, *fulfill your ministry*.

- The Local Church is to enjoy the ministry of those who are sober-minded, who will endure suffering, and who will do the work.

Summary: **Scripture alone is our infallible rule of faith and practice...**

(Segue) *And we will all be held accountable for what we do with this precious gift!*

#### **(4) APPLICATION: WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THIS?**

- **Will you acknowledge Scripture alone as God's Word?**
  - Non-Christian, will you listen to God's Word to you?
  - Christian, will you listen to God's Word to you?
- **Will you resist the urge to put anything beside or above Scripture?**
  - Will you stop imagining that your intuition is equal to Scripture?
  - Will you stop leaving the Bible on the shelf while you make life-altering decisions?
  - Will you stop asking people to obey your ideas without first being sure that your ideas align with Scripture?
- **Will you be completed by God's Word in the context of this local church?**
  - Will you praise God for those who lovingly teach and correct you from Scripture?
  - Will you enjoy the benefits of Gospel-centered community in this local church?

**Major Point: Scripture Alone is God's perfect and sufficient word, necessarily expressed in the context of the local church.**

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

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***Why Sola Scriptura is Crucial to Evangelicalism*** by R.C. Sproul

<https://www.monergism.com/why-sola-scriptura-crucial-evangelicalism>

***What is Sola Scriptura?*** by Joe Mizzi

<http://www.justforcatholics.org/a74.htm>

***Sola Scriptura in Dialogue*** by James White

<http://vintage.aomin.org/SS.html>

***The Cambridge Declaration*** by Various

<http://www.alliancenet.org/cambridge-declaration>

***Dei Verbum*** by Vatican II & Pope Paul VI

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)

***Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*** compiled by Theodore Buckley

<http://www.ecatholic2000.com/trent/untitled-114.shtml>