

The Philosophy of Ministry – Week 5

“Sola Scriptura”

1. Meaning:

- A.** The phrase *sola scriptura* is from the Latin: *sola* having the idea of “_____”, ground, or base,” and the word *scriptura* meaning “writings”—referring to the Scriptures. *Sola scriptura* means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true.
- B. 1689 – Baptist Confession:** “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience,¹ although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation.² Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diversified manners to reveal Himself, and to declare (that) His will unto His church;³ and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now completed.⁴ (paragraph 10) The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved. – chapter 1, paragraph 1,¹⁰
- C. John MacArthur -** “*Sola Scriptura* simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture. It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture. The most ardent defender of *sola Scriptura* will concede, for example, that Scripture has little or nothing to say about DNA structures, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science. *Sola Scriptura* does not claim that everything Jesus or the Apostles ever taught is preserved in Scripture. It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture (2 Peter 1:3). Scripture is therefore the perfect and only standard of spiritual truth, revealing infallibly all that we must believe in order to be saved and all that we must do in order to glorify God. That—no more, no less—is what *sola Scriptura* means. ([What Does Sola Scriptura Mean? \(ligonier.org\)](http://ligonier.org))
- D. Why is this so important issue?**

2. Arguments against Sola Scriptura

- Groups in “Christendom” that contend with sola Scriptura are: _____
 - They believe that Church _____ is in fact on par with Scripture.
- A. “How can Scripture be the final authority when many in the early Church did not have the Bible? Also, it was not always available to everyone.”**
- 1) Does the Scriptures authority depend on its _____?
 - 2) The same problem can be said of the _____ – it was also unavailable to many people in the world.
 - 3) Also, the Jews were very accustomed to passing on the Scriptures verbally.
- B. “There is no passage that declares sola Scriptura, the Bible doesn’t make that claim.”**
- Where is a passage that teaches authority/truth will be only on the Bible and _____?
- C. “Man needs the Church to teach Him what the Bible means.”**
- God has given gifted men in the Church (pastors/teachers – Eph.4), but also His Holy Spirit – John 14:26, 15:26
 1. **John 14:26** — *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
 2. **John 15:26** — *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*
 3. **1 John 2:27** — *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*
- D. “Paul spent years at Thessalonica and other places, yet only wrote two short epistles to the Church there. Are we to think the only things we are to live by are the Scriptures he wrote?”**
- 1) It takes me sometimes months to preach through a chapter of the Bible. The teaching on the text can be expanded for years!
 - 2) He also had the OT and the NT was in the process of being written.
- E. A verse often used by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is 1 Timothy 3:15:**
- 1) **1 Timothy 3:15** — *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*
 - 2) Catholics and Orthodox Churches believe this shows that their specific Church is the true, infallible earthly source of spiritual knowledge, as well as its infallible teachings, and that this passage contradicts sola Scriptura.

3. Does the NT elevate tradition to being on par with Scripture?

- A.** The word “tradition” is used _____ times in the New Testament.

- 1) It is from the Greek “paradosis” which is use 13 times in the NT and 8 times in the Gospels.
- 2) In the context of the Gospels, it speaks of the traditions of men which had been engrafted on the Mosaic Law.

B. Negative uses of the word tradition in the NT

1) **Matthew 15:1-9 — 1;** *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2; Why do thy disciples transgress the **tradition** of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3; But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress **the commandment of God by your tradition?** 4; **For God commanded**, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5; But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your **tradition**. 7; Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8; This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9; But in vain they do worship me, **teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.***

1. V.1-2 - The Jews placed tradition on equal footing with Scripture and even above Scripture by allowing tradition and their oral law to be the foundation as it came into conflict with God’s revealed law.
2. Does Jesus submit to the tradition of the elders according to verse 3?
3. What does Jesus test their traditions with according to verse 4?

2) **The following passage is Marks account of the same story. Underline the word “tradition” as well as what their tradition put them at odds with.**

1. **Mark 7:1-13 — 1;** *Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2; And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. 3; For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4; And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. 5; Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6; He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7; Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8; For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.*

9; And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10; For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11; But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. 12; And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

2. What did Jesus say that their tradition put them at odds with? ____

3. How many times did Jesus say that their tradition put them at odds with God's Word? _____

4. NOTE: All 8 times the word "tradition" is used in the Gospels is always used in a _____ sense. In fact, Jesus never used the word tradition in a positive sense.

3) **Galatians 1:14** — *And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the **traditions** of my fathers.*

- Used in a negative sense as referring to what Paul trusted in when an unbeliever.

4) Other passages warning of man's teachings, doctrines, traditions that can cause men to err.

1. **Colossians 2:8** — *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the **tradition** of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

2. **Colossians 2:20–22** — *20; Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to **ordinances**, 21; (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

3. **Titus 1:13–14** — *13; This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, **and commandments of men**, that turn from the truth.*

4. **Galatians 4:9–11** — *9; But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10; Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

5. **Matthew 9:14–17**

C. Positive uses of tradition in the NT.

1) **1 Corinthians 11:2** — *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the **ordinances** (traditions), as I delivered them to you.*

- This is an example of a positive sense of the word tradition and refers to the _____ as spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:15.

- 2) **2 Thessalonians 2:15** — *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, **whether by word, or our epistle.***
- How did Paul say these “traditions” were taught to them from? ____
- 3) **2 Thessalonians 3:6** — *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the **tradition** which he received of us.*
- This goes back to the tradition that was taught them by the Word and Epistle. Tradition is not wrong as long as it is Scriptural. The traditions must be built on the Word of God as seen here.
- D. Only _____ out of the 13 uses of tradition are seen in a positive sense in the NT. Those traditions were based on God’s Word, they were not man made.
- E. **Should Church traditions be accepted as equally authoritative as Scripture?** Or, should church traditions be followed only if they are in full agreement with Scripture? Traditions are only valid if they are built on the firm foundation of Scripture and in full agreement with the entirety of Scripture.

4. A Defense for Scriptural Sufficiency

- A. **Scripture alone is said to be “_____ -breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16).**
- 1) Scripture is what declares, “Thus said the LORD”. It is the written Word that is referred to as God’s Word. Never is a Church tradition declared to be “God-breathed” or infallible in the Scriptures.
 - 2) **Jesus equated the Scriptures with God’s Word** (John 10:35), whereas Christ never refers to tradition as foundational but rather He condemns them for contradicting Scripture because they were elevating tradition over Scripture (Matthew 15:1-9, Mark 7:1-13).
- B. **Scripture is what Jesus and the apostles turn to in defense or support of their actions and teachings.**
- 1) **How Jesus defended His resurrection:**
 - **Luke 24:25–27** — *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: **26**; Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? **27**; And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*
 - 2) **Did Jesus ever use religious tradition to support His actions or teachings? No**
 - How can the Church declare tradition on equal footing with Scripture when Jesus never once used tradition as the authority.
1. Before the NT was completed the Jews had hundreds of traditions of the elders passed down for centuries in the Talmud (a collection of commentary compiled by Jewish rabbis). Did Jesus or the disciples ever use tradition as a source of truth or build a teaching from it? _____
 2. Nowhere in Scripture does Jesus or any of the apostles appeal to the Jewish traditions. In contrast, Jesus and the apostles quote

from or allude to the Old Testament hundreds of times. In fact, the New Testament directly quotes the Old Testament over _____ times, and there are at least _____ references to the Old Testament in the New.

3) Jesus constantly used the Scriptures in defense of the truth and never turned to traditions.

1. **Matthew 12:3** — *But he said unto them, **Have ye not read** what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;*
2. **Matthew 12:5** — *Or **have ye not read** in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?*
3. **Matthew 19:4** — *And he answered and said unto them, **Have ye not read**, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*
4. **Matthew 22:31** — *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, **have ye not read** that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,*
5. **Mark 12:10** — ***And have ye not read this scripture**; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:*

C. The Scripture is what the Church is to use to refute error:

- 1) In Acts 20:27-32, Paul acknowledges publicly that “wolves” and false teachers would arise from “among yourselves” (within the church). What did he commend them to?
 1. **Acts 20:32** — *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*
 2. Note that Paul does not commend them to the “church leaders” (they were the church leaders) nor to the traditions of the church nor to a particular overseeing elder. Rather, Paul pointed them to the Word of God.
- 2) Jesus taught the error among the Sadducees was due to not knowing the Scriptures:
 - **Mark 12:24** — *And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?*
- 3) It is also what the believer is to build their life upon (Joshua 1:8; Deuteronomy 17:18-19; Psalm 1; Psalm 19:7-11; 119; etc.).
- 4) What did the noble Bereans do to find out if what Paul said was true?
 1. **Acts 17:10-11** — **10**; *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11**; These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the _____ daily, whether those things were so.*
 2. They tested Paul with the Word of God. This is what made them more noble. Again, showing that not even an Apostle was the final authority, rather Scripture was.

D. God’s Word _____ claims infallibility to any Church leader in succession of the Apostles.

- 1) In both the Old and New Testaments, it is seen that duly appointed religious leaders had in fact at times caused the people to go into error.
 1. The priestly sons of Eli – 1 Samuel 2:27-36.
 2. The Scribes and Pharisees – Matthew 15:14; 23:1-7; John 7:48
 3. False teachers rising up in the Church leadership – Acts 20:30
 4. The Apostle _____
 - **Galatians 2:11-13 — 11;** *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12; For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13; And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*
 5. Both the Old and New Testament call people to study to Scriptures to determine what is true and what is false (Psalm 19; 119; Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17).
- 2) Jesus did teach to respect religious leaders (Matthew 23:3), which the apostles followed, but when they opposed the Word of God and the command of Christ, they broke from that authority.
 - **Acts 4:19 — 19;** *But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.*

E. Scripture is declared to be what will never fail and be fulfilled; this promise is never given to tradition.

- 1) **Psalm 119:89 —** *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*
- 2) **Psalm 119:152 —** *Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*
- 3) **Isaiah 40:8 —** *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*
- 4) **Matthew 5:18 —** *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Lk 21:33).*

F. Scripture is declared to be what will produce salvation and sanctification in the believer, not Church tradition.

1) What does God desire to accomplish in the lives of people?

1. To see people _____.

- a. **1 Timothy 1:15 –** *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*
- b. **Matthew 18:11 –** *“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” (1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9)*

2. To see people _____

- a. **1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 –** *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;”*
- **Now the question comes, what produces those 2 things that God desires?** What will bring salvation to a sinner and what will

conform a saved sinner into a sanctified sinner so that they can begin to resemble Jesus Christ with their life; what will allow them to live holy before God?

2) The Word of God produces salvation:

1. **2 Timothy 3:15** - "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."
2. **James 1:18** – "Of his own will begat he us **with the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."
3. **1 Peter 1:22a** – "Seeing ye have **purified your souls in obeying the truth...**"
4. **1 Peter 1:23** – "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever."
5. **Psalm 19:7, John 5:24:63, 12:49-50**

3) The Word Sanctifies the Believer

1. **John 17:17** - Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
2. **John 15:3** - "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."
3. **Ephesians 5:26-27** - "... **That he might (Hagiozo) sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be (Hagios) holy and without blemish."
4. **2 Timothy 3:15–17 — 15**; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16**; All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17**; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

G. Jesus taught Scriptural sufficiency by only using the Scripture to overcome Satan's attacks.

- 1) In Matthew 4, what did Jesus use to overcome Satan? God's Word
- 2) **Ephesians 6:17** — And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

H. Peter declares Scriptural sufficiency in 2 Peter 1:16-21

- 1) **2 Peter 1:16–21 — 16**; For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17**; For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. **18**; And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. **19**; **We have also a more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: **20**; Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. **21**; For the prophecy came not in old time by

the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

- 2) **Peter speaks of being an eyewitness to the transfiguration recorded in Matthew 17;** as amazing and glorious as that experience was, Peter goes on to teach that the Scriptures are “more sure” than even an eyewitness account from the leading disciple.
- I. Psalm 19 and 119 speaks to the sufficiency of Scripture, never once mentioning tradition.
- J. **We are commanded and warned not to add to nor take away from Scripture which is what tradition can do.**
- 1) **Deuteronomy 4:2 — 2;** *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*
 - 2) **Deuteronomy 12:32 — 32;** *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*
 - 3) **Proverbs 30:6 — 6;** *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*
 - 4) **Revelation 22:18–19 — 18;** *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19; And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*
- K. At the end of Paul’s life – he charged Timothy to “Preach the Word”, and said nothing of the traditions to teach or preach (2 Tim. 4:1-4).
- 1) **2 Timothy 4:1–4 — 1;** *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3; For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*
- Conclusion: Though God’s Word doesn’t use the exact words that the Bible stands alone as the only authority for faith and practice, you find that truth displayed all through Scripture. The Bible teaches that it is to be the final authority the Christian turns to for all they believe. When a question arises we must do as Paul did and ask, “what saith the Scriptures”.

