

# How Did We Get Our Bible? The Origin and Authority of Scripture

## #3: Core Beliefs about the Bible: *Sola Scriptura* and the Reformation

Intro: Luther's Big Moment

### I. The Definition of *Sola Scriptura*: What Do We Mean by This Phrase?

A. Simple definition: the Scriptures alone are the Word of God and therefore the only infallible rule for life and doctrine.

- Note: we are not saying the Bible is the *only* authority. Just the *highest* authority!

B. Basis for *Sola Scriptura*: The Infallibility of the Scripture

- Reformers believed the Bible, unlike popes and councils, cannot make mistakes
- Geneva Confession (1536):
  - "First we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as a rule of faith and religion, without mixing it with any other things which might be devised by the opinions of men."

### II. The Purpose of *Sola Scriptura*: What's This Doctrine Guarding Against?

A. Generally: It Guards Against Replacing God's Word with other Authorities

- Humans have struggled with this since the very beginning. Satan: "Did God Really Say...?" (Gen 3:4)
- The original Fall was basically due to replacing God's Word with another authority

B. Specifically:

- Traditionalism: "Church Tradition is Our Guide"
  - Traditionalism during Luther's day: Roman Catholicism
  - *Sola Scriptura* protects Christian liberty!
- Individualism: "My Own Bible Interpretation is my Guide"
  - Menno Simons (1496-1561) refused to consider Council of Nicea or the church fathers
  - Reading the Bible in an individualistic manner does not uphold its authority but merely replaces it with another—ourselves
- Existentialism: "Who Needs the Bible? Religious Experience is My Guide"
  - Luther battled the "enthusiasts" of the radical reformation
  - The message of redemption does not come *within* ourselves but from the *outside*—from God's Word

### III. Implications of *Sola Scriptura*: What Impact Did This Doctrine Have on the Church?

#### A. *Sola Scriptura* Revolutionized the Study of the Bible

- In Luther's day, most people did not own (or read) a personal Bible
- The Reformation launched a movement to translate the Bible into the vernacular
  - Luther translated into German
  - Wycliffe translated into English

#### B. *Sola Scriptura* Revolutionized the Preaching of the Bible

- It changed the centrality of preaching (instead of sacraments)
- It changed the kind of preaching (Christ-centered rather than moralistic)
- It changed the power of preaching (the Word changes people, not us!)
  - **"I simply taught, and preached, and wrote God's Word. Otherwise I did nothing. The Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything." --Martin Luther**