

“You Asked!”- Lesson 1

Question: Can you give a list of maybe 5-10 Scriptures that you think are vital to know as a believer and explain why they are important to memorize?

Answer: Yes! This is a marvelous question and one that deserves our attention. The Bible records literally thousands and thousands of verses. We believe that all are profitable but we also know that we are limited in our ability to internalize and recall those texts. While it is true that the Spirit supernaturally brings many biblical truths to our memory (John 14:26), it is equally true that it is our responsibility to memorize the Bible (Deuteronomy 11:18). The question before us today really boils down to where to start and why?

To answer, I want to borrow a structure that will help us categorize these texts. The framework for my response comes from the Reformation. During this time, Godly men were utilized by God to bring the church back into biblical fidelity. The movement utilized a helpful guideline that we refer to as the 5 “solas”. The term “sola” is roughly defined in English as alone (not the similarity with the word “solo” which, of course, denotes an activity that is undertaken alone). When applied to theology, it denotes the convictions that we have regarding what we uniquely believe. These five assertions that are unique to our faith are helpful guideposts along the way to growth in Christian maturity.

The way we are going to tackle this question is by listing each sola and then referencing two verses that are succinct in their summary of the core truth that is being expressed by the sola.

1. Sola Scriptura

- a. This sola affirms that God’s Word alone is our inerrant, sufficient and final authority as Christians individually and as a church corporately
- b. When we say that Scripture is inerrant, we mean that the Bible is without fault or error in all of its teaching
 - i. There is no mistake in the Scripture, all that God teaches is accurate
 - ii. This does not mean that man doesn’t INTERPRET the Bible incorrectly, but it means that all Scripture works together, with no part being out of step with the whole, when rightly divided
 - iii. This belief undergirds our convictions at Smyrna and it is seen most clearly in chronological, expositional preaching
 1. When the Bible is taught, rightly, all of it lines up together and, therefore, each individual part sheds light on the whole which leads us to a fuller understanding of God
 - iv. One implication of this belief is that the Bible must be the authority in all things
 1. God’s Word is perfect, men are not
 2. Therefore, men must subject their thoughts, actions and beliefs to the Word as a surer foundation of life

- c. Two verses that are helpful to memorize here:
 - i. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 affirms that God is the source of Scripture (“God-breathed”) which is the reason that it is perfect as God is perfect. Furthermore, this verse teaches us that the Bible is sufficient for life as it is able to equip man for “every good work”
 - ii. 2 Peter 1:21 teaches us a bit about the mechanics of how God inspired His Word. We do not deny that men physically put pen to paper, but we believe that God superintended that process, carrying them to write only that which was a direct result of His intention

2. Solus Christus

- a. This affirmation teaches us that Christ alone is the reason for our salvation
- b. Men have always attempted to create false religions or add to the true Christian faith by affirming a place for their works in achieving salvation
 - i. The Catholic Church affirmed the need of grace But Roman Catholicism also posits a system whereby men cooperate with grace, working together to achieve their place in the Kingdom
 - ii. In this type of system, God helps man
 - iii. However in true, biblical, Christianity God saves man all by Himself
- c. What is it that causes a person to be saved? The answer is Christ alone
 - i. Nothing can be added to what Jesus accomplished
- d. Two helpful verses for memorization:
 - i. Romans 3:23-24. Notice that we are justified as a “gift” through Christ. We did not earn what God gave, we were given salvation and it only comes through Jesus who redeemed us
 - ii. John 14: 6. Jesus says here that He is “The way”. There is no other way, you come to God through Christ alone.

3. Sola Fide

- a. This sola teaches us that we are saved by faith.
- b. How does a person benefit from the redemption that Jesus alone offers? The biblical answer is by faith!
- c. Faith is the means that we latch onto God’s precious offer of salvation. Those who truly believe in Christ (namely, His perfect life, sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection) are saved.
- d. Helpful verses:

- i. Romans 10:9. Notice here that it is by “believing in your heart” that a man is saved. The biblical definition of belief is more than mere repetition of words. It is an inward conviction that the Gospel of Christ is true. Some would say that confession is added to belief such that faith is not alone. They would argue that we are saved by faith AND confession but this is to misunderstand the ramifications of true faith. Those who truly believe will confess because the mouth speaks what the heart harbors (Luke 6:45). Confession is merely the outward manifestation of true belief. We are saved by faith alone.
- ii. Ephesians 2:8-9. Some might think that this command to believe is an action. Isn’t God justifying us by our works if we truly believe and confess? No! The reason is that even our faith is a gift of God. If you have faith, it is not because you conjured it up, it is because God in His mercy gave you that faith. Even your right confession of Christ is an underserved gift.

4. Sola Gratia

- a. Sola Gratia teaches us that we are saved by grace alone
- b. What was it that caused God to choose to save us? Was it some merit in us or some characteristic that earned His favor? The answer is that God chose us for salvation solely by His grace
- c. Verses to memorize
 - i. John 1:16. Those who have been blessed with the “fulness” of God have received “grace upon grace”. It was grace that began the good work of salvation in us (meaning nothing that we deserved) and it is grace that sustains us in our standing before God.
 - ii. Romans 9:16. Our salvation depended, solely, upon God who “has mercy”. This is important! What separates you, believer, from the lost man next door is not your intellect, charisma or innate value, it is the grace of God in Christ alone. You did not earn your standing but you were given it by God, may that truth inspire you to humility AND hope that those who are still dead in their sins and rebels fighting against God may be granted the same reprieve. God’s Sovereignty in salvation is not a dead end, it is the ground of our hope that any and all who are currently lost in their trespasses and buried in their sin could be resurrected, revived and redeemed.

5. Soli Deo Gloria

- a. Why would God do this? The answer is for His glory.
- b. The ultimate design of God in salvation through the Gospel of Christ is His glory. He saves us so that we would worship Him, which is fitting in light of who He is and what He has done.
- c. Some might think this sounds arrogant but this is to misunderstand the parties at play and the beauty of the design

- i. First, can God be arrogant? Is it possible for God to think too highly of Himself? What compliment does God not deserve? What aspects of God are not perfect? If God is truly the Divine Originator and Creator of the universe, is it arrogant to merely accept the praise that is due such an exalted position?
- ii. Others might think that this means we are left out but this misunderstands our design. You see, when we see and savor something good and pleasing the result is ALWAYS praise. When you saw your spouse for the first time, when you went to that breathtaking national park or ate that scrumptious bite of food, what happened? The answer is that you praised something or someone... why? Because we were created for praise AND our enjoyment of something leads us, instinctively and uniformly to that praise
 - 1. To see God, is to see that which is more beautiful, worthwhile and glorious than any other sight and the response of praise is the response of One who is gloriously fulfilled and satisfied with what he or she sees. The point then is that God's praise is not in opposition to our fulfillment, it is the way that we find our ultimate joy and fulfillment

d. Verses to memorize

- i. Romans 11:36. All things exist for His glory alone. Everything came from Him, through Him and they exist for Him. This means that all things we encounter are only rightly leveraged when they lead us to the act of glorifying God.
- ii. 1 Corinthians 10:31. Does this mean that we are supposed to spend our entire lives in a formal worship service? No! What it means is that all things are given to us for our enjoyment and joy in God. God gains glory in at least two ways through life: first, through our praise of Him. When we eat something good, enjoy a person He has given us as a spouse, child or family member or glory in a beautiful day, it is right for us to pause and praise God. Second, God gains glory as we enjoy the gift He has given. One of the primary ways the gift giver gains honor is by witnessing the one who receives the gift enjoy it. Christians should enjoy this life as we remember the Goodness of the One who gave it to us!