

Sola Scriptura

Part 1 of 4 - Inspired by God and Complete

One of the greatest challenges facing the church and individual believers today is the notion that the Bible is not the infallible, authoritative, indisputable and living Word of God. There are those in this world, and even some within Christian circles, who would have us believe that the Bible does not contain absolute, unchanging truth that is relevant for all societies, peoples, cultures, and times. As a result of this kind of thinking, the Bible is seen as just another book among millions of others that you may or may not choose to read – it isn't seen as important, valuable, relevant or necessary to life today.

It has gotten to the point that even some Christians view it merely as a book that they read on Sundays at church, or loosely base an occasional devotional around, or they just scan through it as one does the newspaper or a magazine – for informational purposes only, with very little impact and change upon their life. They may read Christian books about the Bible or books based on principles taught in the Bible, but very few Christians have dedicated themselves to diligently studying “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Instead, we fill our bellies (lives) with the “junk food” that this world offers in the forms of Hollywood entertainment, sports, media, the Internet, games and all areas of self-indulgence, to the point that we no longer desperately hunger and thirst after the Word of God. We spend mere minutes a day (or week) reading the Bible and deceive ourselves into thinking that this will be enough for solid, spiritual nutrition and growth.

Many Christians do not read and study the Bible more deeply and diligently because they have never been mentored, discipled or taught how to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). This lack of discipleship in the area of personal bible study has created Christians who are ashamed to share the Word of God, scared of those that question their faith and beliefs, and feel threatened and skeptical of other Christians who diligently study the Scriptures. The good news is that the Bible is not too difficult for the believing heart to understand, especially when given the proper tools, study methods and guidance.

This series of articles seeks to assist Christians in developing a strong belief and conviction that Scripture alone (Latin: “sola scriptura”) is complete, authoritative, true and contains “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Why is this doctrine so essential and important? “Rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) can move one from “using milk” and being “unskillful in the word of righteousness” (Heb. 5:13) to “strong meat” which “belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). So as a foundation for this series and to create a spiritual hunger and appetite for the living Word of God, let's begin by studying the divine inspiration and completeness of Scripture.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible has been inspired by God and is complete.

The Christian Bible is a collection of 66 books (39 Old Testament, 27 New Testament), written by over 40 different authors over a 1,600 year span in many different lands. Unquestionably, it is the most published sacred book in all of history. However, it is more than just a wonderful work of literature. It contains the very thoughts, directives, will, characteristics, and nature of Almighty God. The Bible presents a personal, powerful, living God who has revealed Himself to us through His creation (Rom. 1:19-20), and who wants us to come to know Him on an intimate and personal level through His Son Jesus Christ (John 17:3). The Bible enables us to grow in our knowledge of God (Col. 1:9-10), helps us understand and discern “what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17), “makes us wise unto salvation through faith” (2 Tim. 3:15), and then invites and equips us to become involved in His work on this earth as “ambassadors for Christ” in bringing the gospel of reconciliation to the lost (2 Cor. 5:20). Without faith

that the Bible is the revealed, written and inspired Word of God, it is impossible to truly and personally know God.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible has been inspired by God

In apostle Paul's last letter before his death, he wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Inspiration is the act of the Holy Spirit in revealing to human authors the message that God wants to communicate to mankind. God gave the prophecies and the words to the writers who penned the Bible through the inspiration and moving of the Holy Spirit. Paul explains it this way, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:12-13). God inspired the message and the messenger.

The apostle Peter also supported the doctrine that the Bible was written under the inspiration and direction of God, when he wrote, "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: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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 Pet. 1:19-21). Peter says that the prophecy of scripture was not just humanly inspired thoughts that the writers expressed in their own words (i.e., private interpretation) – they spake and wrote as they were moved (Greek *phero* def'n: directed, carried, driven) by the Holy Ghost.

The writers were God-directed in that God selected the words out of each man's own life, his own personality, his own vocabulary, his own experiences, and his own emotions, and put together an entire book over a period of 1,600 years that is comprehensive, conclusive, concise, consistent and cohesive. No amount of human inspiration or wisdom could possibly accomplish that.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible is complete

We also believe that the canon of Scripture was closed with the death of the first apostles of Jesus Christ. In the last 1,900 years or more since their death, nothing has been added to the Bible. That's the problem and error of most cults, that in addition to their "Bible," they have other "inspired" writings, teachings or creeds that "supersede" the Bible (e.g., Watchtower publications, Book of Mormon, Koran, certain traditions or teachings of the church leaders, etc.). We do not need a special vision, new revelation or a voice from heaven to learn or know about God – everything we need to know about Him and how to live a powerful, faithful and obedient Christian life is contained in His Word (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The Bible, coupled with the indwelling illumination of the Holy Spirit, is the only foundation that the believer needs to build, grow and maintain a right relationship with God.

In the next article, we will delve a little deeper into the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of Scripture, and its absolute importance as the primary source of strength, direction, instruction, conviction and transformation in the lives of "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2).

This article appeared in the "Truth for our Time" column in the "Christian Friendship Messenger", and is prepared by the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) Communications Committee. Comments or questions can be directed to: ACCNcommunications@gmail.com