

Sola Scriptura (Isaiah 55:8-13; John 1:1-5, 14 and 2 Timothy 3:10-17)

08-Oct-2017

This the 2nd of a 5 part series on the *Protestant Reformation* - as we celebrate and remember the Reformation which began 500 years ago.

Before we start - let me pray for God's wisdom, guidance and understanding first

Intro/Context

So 500 years ago this month

The Protestant Reformation began

And it was basically a protest against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church at the time

And as we said last week - the Reformers came up with "5 Solas" - Sola is Latin for only or alone

So they came up with 5 Only's or 5 Alones - 5 Solas...

The protesters were basically saying that the Church's teaching should be based on:

[Powerpoint 1-5 Solas]

Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone

Sola Gratia - Grace Alone

Sola Fide - Faith Alone

Solus Christus - Christ Alone

Soli Deo Gloria - Glory to God Alone

Throughout this month - we will look at one of these *Five Solas*

Last week we looked at *Sola Fide* - Faith Alone

This week we will look at *Sola Scripture* (Scripture Alone)

(pause)

[Powerpoint 2-Luther-Meet the Family]

One of those protesters was a German man called, Martin Luther - born 10th Nov 1483.

Martin's father, Hans, was a furnace-master, melting iron and turning it into tools, and ironwork for carts and houses.

Hans often said: "*Our Martin is going to do better than this! He's going to be rich and famous, and marry a pretty wife! No hard work for him, we'll send him to university and make him a lawyer*"

Martin's mum, Margarete, used to look at the painting on their wall of St. Anne and say: "*St. Anne has looked after us, she'll look after Martin too*"

During the time that Martin Luther lived:

- Most people were sure that the earth was flat - until Christopher Columbus proved everyone wrong
- Printing had been invented about 40 years before Martin was born
- All Church services were in Latin
- People believed the Pope was *always* right

Things were about to change...

One day at school - Martin was made to stand in front of the class with a donkey's head mask on - whilst the schoolmaster-priest called him stupid. Martin had been beaten 14 times that week for doing his Latin badly - and then beaten by his father for being beaten at school.

So Martin ran away into the forest.

When he was lost and afraid - he made a promise to St. Anne "*If you help me, I'll do whatever you want. I'll never run away again*"

It turned out Martin was a great deal cleverer than his beatings suggested and when he grew up - he had no trouble getting a place in the University of Erfurt. Martin was a brilliant scholar and had lots of friends and was great company - especially when he played his lute and led their favourite songs. But he was also moody - and would suddenly disappear from these gatherings to roam the streets alone.

Martin felt sure that God was angry with him. He thought God would never forgive him because he didn't say enough prayers, he didn't go to church enough and he didn't punish himself enough. He felt it was wrong to enjoy himself with his friends - when he should be saying his prayers. He thought perhaps he should be a monk and not a lawyer

After finishing university - he was riding home one day and got caught in a thunderstorm - he said it felt like the end of the world

He thought to himself - what would happen to him if it was the end of the world?

He wouldn't go to Heaven, he thought, I'm not good enough.

But surely he wasn't bad enough to go to hell?

No he would probably go to purgatory - the place between Heaven and Hell that the priests were always preaching about - the place where it was taught people's souls stayed for thousands of years, suffering and tormented until God was satisfied

Again - Martin made a promise to St. Anne - that if she saved him he'd become a monk!

So Martin joined the monastery

Life as a monk - meant half the day in prayer, chapel and their private cells (rooms) in silence. Then cleaning, cooking, washing and working in the vegetable garden. Then begging for food in the village.

Shortly after, Martin was became a priest. Martin's father was concerned - *"the church has no right to deal with young men like this - making them afraid, leaving them hungry and begging for food"*

Martin's response to his father was *"The Church is always right"*

That was something Martin would soon change his mind about

A visit to Rome as a representative of the Augustinian monasteries opened

Martin's eyes

He paid to see some astonishing relics in Rome:

- A thorn from the burning bush of Moses
- Hairs from the donkey that Jesus rode into Jerusalem
- A piece of wood from the Cross Jesus was crucified on

- And he climbed the stairs they said Jesus climbed in Pontius Pilates' palace

[Powerpoint 3-Luther continued]

2 things Martin couldn't get out of his mind when he returned to Germany

- a) The scandalous things he saw in Rome
- b) The certainty that God had still not forgiven him

Martin studied and became a professor at Wittenberg University - lecturing on Aristotle and the influence of philosophy on theology.

The Prior (superior monk) of the monastery (Prior Staupitz) and the Duke Fredrick of Saxony (province of Saxony where Luther lived) - both knew how brilliant Luther was but yet Luther always seemed unhappy and worried

So he was given the job as Professor of Biblical Studies - to keep him busy

Martin objected: *"I hardly know anything about the Bible - only that we read it in the services in Church"*

The Prior - said *"You better learn quickly then..."*

"The Bible is so dull" Luther muttered as he stood in front of the leather bound volumes in the library - but as He started reading the Bible volumes - he couldn't put them down.

Suddenly Jesus seemed like a real person and Jesus' words came to life

- *Whoever believes in me will have eternal life*

- *Your sins are forgiven*
- *No one comes to the Father except through me!*

Suddenly all the years of misery and doubt, Martin had, were swept away. God was not angry with him. God loved him. God has already forgiven him through faith in Jesus - and Martin was free from all that burden!

Martin concluded - that if the Bible is right, as he was sure it was after reading it over and over - if the Bible is right then many of the things in Church - and what the Church is teaching are wrong!

Things like

- Prayers to saints and Mary - rather than praying directly to God
- The Pope and Priests forgiving people's sins - when only God could do that
- The Pope being infallible - when only God and His Word are infallible
- The teaching of Purgatory (based on 1 Cor 3:15) and the selling of indulgences

[Powerpoint 4-Luther 95]

And it was the whole teaching of purgatory and indulgences that was the final straw for Luther

The Pope sent a monk named Tetzel to sell indulgences in Saxony

Tetzel said to the people *"These pieces of paper are indulgences. If you buy these special indulgences from the Pope himself, they will get you out of purgatory a*

hundred, even a thousand years more quickly. It all depends how much you pay! You can buy them to get your parents and friends out of purgatory. You can buy them to forgive big sins and little sins. You can even buy one that will get you forgiveness for all the sins you commit between now and the time you die! All the money will help to build the new church of St. Peter in Rome"

That was the final straw for Martin...

So on 31st October 1517 - Martin Luther nailed 95 theses (protests) to the church door at Wittenberg - statements about God, forgiveness, the Bible, indulgences, the Pope and so on.

Within a year, Luther was on trial in Augsburg before one of the Pope's cardinals - Cajetan.

The Cardinal said: *"Dr. Luther, you have been teaching wrong things"*

"But I can prove it from the Bible..." began Luther

The Cardinal snapped: *"People are not allowed to read the Bible. It's too dangerous - You are not here to argue - You are here to admit you're wrong!"*

Then in 1521 Luther appeared at the Emperor's Council in Worms - this time he had to admit he was wrong - or it would mean his death - burnt at the stake!

Will he back down?

Let's see...

[Powerpoint5-DVD Slip]

Because Martin Luther had read God's Word

[Powerpoint 6-Quote]

He could no longer in all good conscience - agree with the current teaching of the church

He could not back down!

He made a stand for God's Word!

(pause)

It's worth pointing out that the Reformation protest was not against church traditions - it was against traditions that clearly went against the teachings of the Bible

What is God's Word?

[Powerpoint 7-Heading-God's Word]

SO what is God's Word - that made it so important for Martin to stand up for it?

Well we need look no further than the first Book of the Bible

[Powerpoint7a-God's Word is Creational]

1. **God's Word is Creational** - God spoke and created everything out of nothing (Gen 1) - God said: "*Let there be light*"; "*Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water*" and so on...

[Powerpoint 7b- God's Word is actually His Son Jesus]

2. **God's Word is actually Jesus. God's Son** - we get that from our NT reading today from John 1:1-5 [turn there] - where it says the Word was with God in the beginning - and this Word is a "Him" - and through that "Him" everything was made. In fact nothing was made that wasn't originally made by this "Him". And we know this "Him" is Jesus because a few verses later, in verse 14 - John tells us that this "Word" - this "Him" - *became flesh* form - and lived among the people of Israel 2000 years ago - and that this "Him" is actually God's Son! So it's like Jesus is a walking, talking Bible with flesh on. Not only that Jesus himself says that God's Word, Scripture, is all about Him. He says that in Luke 24:27 "*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he (Jesus) explained to them (the disciples) what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*" And not only is the Word of God, Jesus - and not only is God's Word all about Him - *all the Promises of God are yes in Jesus* (2 Corinthians 1:20)

[Powerpoint 7c- God's Word has a saving purpose]

3. God's Word has a **saving purpose**. God's Word became flesh and lived with the people because God had a purpose for His Word. And that purpose was *to seek and save people who were lost from God* (Luke 19:10). *Jesus came into the world to save sinners* - to save people who had/have turned away from God (1 Timothy 1:15) and as the Apostle John puts it because *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into*

the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

[Powerpoint 7d- God's Word is absolute Truth]

4. God's Word is the **absolute source of Truth** - Psalm 119:60 says this about God's Word: *All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.* And John 1:17 says this about Jesus coming to this Earth: *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* And Jesus Himself says: that *He is the way, the truth and the life* (John 14:6) and Jesus told Pontius Pilate: *"You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* (John 18:37)

Five Reasons why we can trust God's Word

So now that we know what God's Word is

[Powerpoint 8-Headings]

Here's 5 reasons why we can trust God's Word - like Martin Luther did...

[Powerpoint 8a-Infallible]

1. God's word is **infallible** - it all checks out - it is self-authenticating - it cross-references itself over centuries between the writers of the Bible who wrote God's Words down. Proverbs 30:5 says *Every word of God is flawless*. So God's Word is the only source of words that are not prone to error - The Pope - the Church - and people are not infallible - only God and His Word is infallible!!

[Powerpoint 8b-Complete]

2. God's Word is **complete** - Jesus said "*It is finished*" on the cross - He said that because He had achieved God's plan and purpose to rescue us. He said all we have to do is believe in Him to have forgiveness and eternal life. And He also fulfilled the commandments and said that loving God and loving others are what's needed. We cannot add to God's Word - because that we then be adding to what Jesus has already done and completed - as Proverbs 30:6 (and Deut 4:2) says: *Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*- And Revelation 22:18-19 warns about *adding to God's Words and Prophecies and receiving plagues!*

[Powerpoint 8c-authority]

3. God's word is **totally authoritative** - Psalms 119:89 says this: *Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.* The Apostle Peter says this about God's Word in 2 Peter 1:20-21: *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* And Jesus said *Scripture cannot be broken* (John 10:35)

[Powerpoint 9a-sufficient]

4. God's word is **totally sufficient for all our needs**. That's where our NT passage from 2 Timothy 3:15-17 comes in [Please turn there now]: What we learn from this "go to" passage is that:

- a. Scripture needs to be taught to people when their young - that's how Timothy learnt
- b. That Scripture is "God Breathed" - it is all from God
- c. That Scripture gives us enough detail to understand how we can be saved and right with God (like we learned last week - we are saved by Grace through Faith in Jesus - not by works)
- d. Scripture teaches us more about God, about Jesus and ourselves - As Luther read the Bible - he learned he could be forgiven by God after all - through Jesus' death on the cross
- e. Sometimes Scripture rebukes us - tells us off - when we realize we have been thinking, saying or doing something contrary to God's Word - that's how Luther realized the church's teachings were wrong! Like - priests can't forgive sins - only God can!
- f. And Scripture trains us how to live lives pleasing to God
- g. And Scripture gets us equipped to do the good works God has prepared for us
- h. Basically from Scripture - we have all we need to be saved and to bring glory to God

[Powerpoint 9b-sufficient]

5. Finally - God's word **accomplishes what God intends** - we get that from our OT reading from Isaiah 55:11 - *where God says: my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* For example God the Father

sent His Word, His Son, Jesus, to live and die on this Earth to save people
 - and then His Word, Jesus, returned to Him, having achieved what the
 Father intended

What to do with God's Word

So we have been presented with God's Word

And good reasons for trusting God's Word

So - what will we do with God's Word?

3 R's

[Powerpoint 10a-Read it]

1. READ IT - to learn more about God, His Son and Ourselves - Reading the Bible is not dangerous - Luther read it and it changed his life/history - Luther gave the German people the greatest gift of all - God's Word in their own language (instead of Latin) - so they could read it for themselves. To illustrate how useful reading the Bible [Illustration of pen-pal letters - God wants us to fall in love with Him and His Son by reading the Bible]

[Powerpoint 10b-Read]

2. RELY ON IT - The Bible is the instruction manual for life and life eternal. We can believe its promises, and find out how to be saved - discover the absolute truth - truth that sets us free - as Luther found out- and we can hang on to the hope of Heaven and that Jesus is coming back one day

[Powerpoint 10c-Respond]

3. RESPOND TO IT - The Bible says love God, love others and to tell people the Good News of Jesus. These are commands - not optional extras. Jesus says if you love me - you will obey my commands.

Conclusion

Of course our response to God's Word may put us at odds - with people we know or people in our community - who don't follow God's Word - and just like the Church in Luther's time were teaching and believing things not in the Bible - we are living in a society where many people follow and promote things that are also not in the Bible.

We've just heard what God's Word is - why we can't trust it - and what it achieves
God's Word teaches us how to live life for God

God's Word is literally a matter of life and death - believing in Jesus - the Word - determines our eternal destination.

SOOOOO....

Will you join Martin Luther and say? *"My conscience is Captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen"*

Let's pray...