

# “Sola Scriptura”

2 Timothy 3:14—4:5

Paul says, “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching.” Unfortunately, I believe the time is here. It is increasingly difficult to find people who want to have a meaningful conversation about God. Go into any bookstore not located on one of our Seminary campuses, go to the religion section and you will find “New Age spirituality”, religious commentary from people who are little more than self-help cheerleaders, and increasingly there are books on the occult – not how to avoid it, but how to participate in it.

It really comes down to what Paul first said to Timothy, “continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.” You need to have a good teacher. You need to have a faithful teacher. Paul says elsewhere that “if anyone proclaims a Gospel that is in any way different from what I have told you, understand that they are servants of Satan disguising themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-14).

This is why we need to be “acquainted with the sacred writings . . . trained in righteousness, competent, and equipped for every good work.” We need to be ready to answer when our faith gets challenged.

This is why we have our children study the catechism as they confirm the faith of their Baptism. Nobody likes doing memory work. I hated it growing up. And my dad was my pastor, so I really had no choice. But

those words are with me, and they support and sustain me in my faith to this day. The Bible passages that I studied and memorized at Martin Luther School in Louisville, KY have been the foundation of my baptismal faith for more than 40 years.

If my education had been according to what my young itching ears wanted to hear, I wouldn't have chosen that curriculum. It is like what I have heard over the years from certain students at St. James Lutheran School. There are students at that fine institution who think the school day should consist of recess, lunch, P.E., Art, and Music – emphasis on recess.

If that were the curriculum, the students at St. James would tell all their friends that they go to the coolest school in town. School is so much fun. Every kid in town would be asking their parents, "Please let us go to St. James." The students would think it is the most awesome school until the time came that they would depart the school. Then, and only then, would they realize that they are completely unprepared for what lies ahead in their life to come.

If a school stripped out its core teachings and focused on recess and play time, the kids may think it is cool, but would you still call it a school? We confess the Nicene Creed each week before coming to receive the body and blood of Christ, because this is the doctrinal statement and confession of the Christian church since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century.

If we would strip out the core teachings of who God is – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that Jesus Christ is of one substance with the Father; that He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and on the third day He rose again – according to the Scriptures. If we would strip out what the Scriptures teach about God and His saving work, then we are no longer members of the body of Christ and His church.

As we gather around God's Word and Sacraments, confess our faith in a crucified and risen Savior, speak and sing the words of the liturgy drawn

from Scripture, and gather with angels, arch-angels and all the company of heaven in the union and communion we have in Christ, the world mocks us and says, “why would you want to spend valuable time on the weekend doing that?”

Why? Because “all Scripture is breathed out by God.” The words of Scripture contain the most beautiful and joyous message we can hear. You have a Father in heaven who loves you so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die so that the guilt of your sin is separated from you “as far as the East is from the West”, Scripture says.

You have a Savior who offered His broken body and shed blood on the altar of the cross, and He continues to offer His broken body and shed blood to you in, with, and under the form of bread and wine.

You have been called to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. You have been adopted by God and called by name to be His true child. When we gather each week around the “God breathed” Word and His Sacraments, and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, it is a joyful event. I think that what we do here is pretty cool, because not only do we have style, but we have substance.

Where I really see the value of what we have within our church is in the people I visit in the nursing home. Focusing on the Word of God, teaching the Catechism, having a consistent liturgy, having hymns that are rich and deep in meaning gives the opportunity to make those words and the music of the church a part of you. So often, especially with the Alzheimer patients, communicating is a challenge. However, I start with the liturgy and they are right there with me. To see the Word of God pouring out from within them and the life of the church still in their hearts, it is an awe inspiring event. It is beautiful to see the joy of communion with Christ.

However, for those of us who are blessed to come here whenever we please, we need to remember that just having Bibles and hymnals in your pew and Luther's Catechism on your shelf at home doesn't mean you have good theology.

Having good theology means we have good practice. What we do in our daily life needs to match the belief of our doctrine and teaching. Paul says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God . . . profitable for teaching . . . and for training in righteousness." God's Word fills you. Jesus says, "From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." Throughout your week, does the Word of God fill your speech, or do other words come out?

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are nourished with the body of Christ; the blood of Christ is in you. Yet, Paul says that, even if you can understand all the mysteries of God and have a faith that can move mountains, if you do not demonstrate this with love, you are just a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Paul reminds Timothy of those who taught him the Word of God. We heard who that was two weeks ago in our Epistle lesson. It was his grandmother Lois and his mother named Eunice. From the time he was a baby, his good teachers were present and active. Be present and active in the life of your family.

Show your faith by being faithful. Be faithful to God; be faithful to the authorities over you; be faithful to the ones God has placed in your care.

Know your Bible. All Scripture is breathed out by God. It is the foundation of our faith. Know your Catechism. It is such a clear and concise interpretation of the Word of God. And rejoice that you are a child of God and part of the family of Our Redeemer. We have a great message. We proclaim Christ crucified. We proclaim Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! We proclaim the sacred writings, breathed out by God, which have made us wise for salvation. Amen.