SOLA SCRIPTURA

CASE STUDIES

ESTABLISHING THE PROPER
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
SCRIPTURE & TRADITION



THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

What must I do in order to be saved?

There is no more important question you and I will ever answer.

CASE STUDY 01

THE JEWEL & THE SAFE

SOLA SCRIPTURA · SOLA FIDE

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17
EPHESIANS 2:8–10



THE JEWEL AND THE SAFE

The way I like to put it is that sola fide is the “what” of the Reformation; sola Scriptura, the “how.” The first is an object, the second a method. The first is a precious jewel; the second, the safe that protects it.

— GAVIN ORTLUND What It Means to Be Protestant

Outline

SOLA SCRIPTURA

I

The Safe

The “how”: a method that protects the gospel.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

SOLA FIDE

II

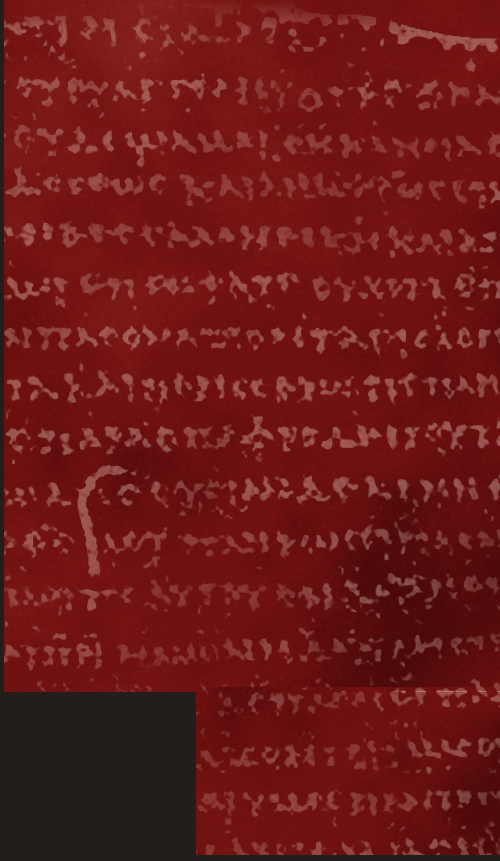
The Jewel

The “what”: the gospel itself.

Ephesians 2:8–10

I

Is Scripture alone enough to make us complete?



A DEFINITION

Henceforth, [the reformers] established the position of sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"), meaning that Scripture is our only ultimate authority for faith and practice. This doesn't mean that the Bible is the only place where truth is found, but it does mean that everything else we learn about God and his world, and all other authorities, are subordinate to the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the sole necessary and sufficient source of our theology.

— JUSTIN S. HOLCOMB Know the Creeds and Councils · 2014 · p. 102

We'll test this definition against the Scriptures, then come back to it.

THE WORD OF GOD · NORMA NORMANS

2 TIMOTHY

3:16–17

ESV

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:17

“complete”

THE WORD MEANS

To make perfect

The Bible has in it the ability to perfect the Christian.

Written about pastors, but a principle for all of us.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 · ESV

2 CORINTHIANS

3:18

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · THE SAME PRINCIPLE, FOR ALL OF US

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

THE WORD OF GOD · THE NEW COVENANT PROMISE

EZEKIEL

36:27

ESV

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible, empowered by God the Holy Spirit, transforms us into Christ's image. **It perfects us.**

2 Timothy 3:17 · 2 Corinthians 3:18 · Ezekiel 36:27

Is anything else needed?

ANOTHER WAY TO COME TO GOD

Any way but faith in Jesus Christ

- If it were true, it would be in the book that perfects you
- It isn't, **so it's wrong**

SOMETHING ADDED

Anything more to be made like God

- If we needed it, it would be in the book
- It isn't, **so it's wrong**

Back to our definition

Scripture is our only ultimate authority for faith and practice… The Scriptures are the sole necessary and sufficient source of our theology.

— Justin S. Holcomb

Inspired	2 Timothy 3:16
Perfecting	2 Timothy 3:17
Transforming	2 Corinthians 3:18
Empowering	Ezekiel 36:27

THE CONTEXT · COUNCIL OF TRENT, 1546

Trent ruled that Scripture and tradition were to be given equal weight in determining what Christians ought to believe. The council decided that in addition to the Scriptures stood "also the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession." This is in contrast to the Protestants, who wanted to give the final and arbitrating authority to the Scriptures alone.

— JUSTIN S. HOLCOMB Know the Creeds and Councils · 2014 · p. 102

Sola Scriptura: not Scripture without tradition, but tradition under Scripture.

The Reformers kept the creeds

1529

Luther’s Small & Large Catechisms

- Expound the Apostles’ Creed
- Show it is taught by Scripture

1542

Calvin’s Geneva Catechism

- Expounds the Apostles’ Creed
- Shows it is taught by Scripture

1563

The Heidelberg Catechism

- Expounds the Apostles’ Creed
- Proves each article from Scripture

Not anti-tradition: reforming to the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)

SOLA, NOT SOLO

Sola Scriptura is not solo scriptura.

Scripture alone is our ultimate authority for faith and practice, not our only resource.

Tradition, under Scripture

WHERE IT ALIGNS WITH SCRIPTURE

Embrace it

- Pastors and elders who faithfully teach the Bible
- Study Bibles that faithfully explain it
- Tradition that faithfully embraces it

Good to go!

WHERE IT CONTRADICTS OR ADDS

Reject it

- At best: unnecessary for becoming like Jesus
- At worst: legalistic distractions from what makes us like Christ

On the authority of Scripture alone

THE SAFE

We must uphold sola Scriptura to defend sola fide. We must defend the safe to protect the jewel.

GROUNDED IN

2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 Corinthians 3:18

Ezekiel 36:27

WHY IT MATTERS

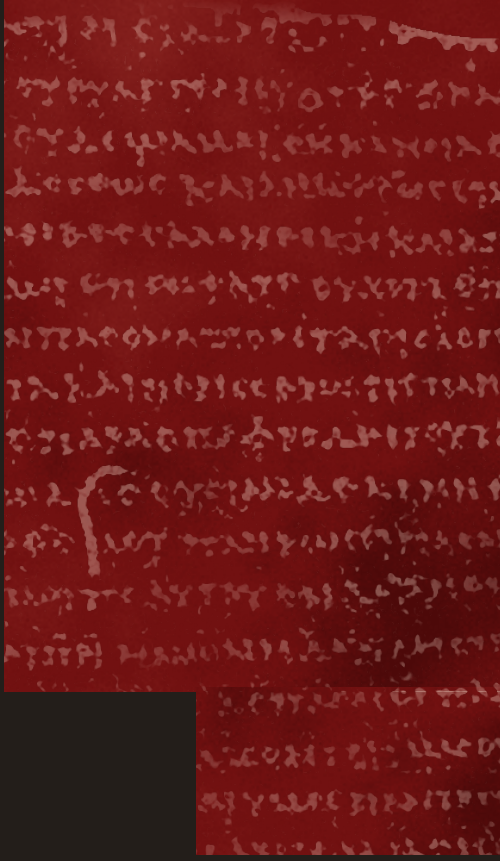
Through church history, churches that moved away from sola Scriptura wandered from the gospel.

Talk it over

1. Re-read 2 Timothy 3:16–17. How important is Scripture in growing in godliness, according to Paul? Share a time when you have been sanctified through the power of Scripture (e.g., on your own, through a discipler, by a sermon).
2. In your own words, come to a group agreement on a biblical definition of sola Scriptura.
    a. How would you explain the importance of affirming the doctrine of sola Scriptura?

II

How can we be saved?



EPHESIANS

2:8–10

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · NORMA NORMANS

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

“But God”

EPHESIANS 2:1–3

By nature, children of wrath

- Dead in trespasses and sins
- Every one of us has sinned
- Owed only the wrath of God

EPHESIANS 2:4–7

Now, children of God

- Rich in mercy, out of great love
- Made alive together with Christ
- Raised and seated with him

EPHESIANS 2:8

“by grace”

THE WORD MEANS

Unmerited favor

Not because of anything in ourselves. By nature, we are children of wrath.

Totally unearned. Given by a loving, gracious God.

For **by grace** you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8–9 · ESV

EPHESIANS 2:8

“through faith”

THE WORD MEANS

Trust, confidence, belief

Knowing the gospel is true isn't enough. That’s knowledge.

Faith trusts Jesus Christ alone to save you.

For by grace you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8–9 · ESV

EPHESIANS 2:8–9

“not your own doing”

PAUL SETS FAITH AGAINST

Works: “not a result of works”

Every other religion: do something to earn God’s favor.

The gospel: you cannot do enough, and he knows that.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is **not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8–9 · ESV

ROMANS

3:28

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · CORROBORATING TEXT

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

GALATIANS

2:16

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · CORROBORATING TEXT

yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

We are saved — justified — by faith, **not works**.

Faith, and trying to appease God by our own works, are contradictory in Scripture.

Ephesians 2:8–9 · Romans 3:28 · Galatians 2:16

EPHESIANS 2:8

“you have been saved”

IN THE GREEK

The perfect tense

Began in the past, when we believed, and its effect continues today.

“You have been saved, and remain in a saved condition.”

For by grace **you have been saved** through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8–9 · ESV

Justification and sanctification

JUSTIFICATION

A completed event

- Once, at the moment we believe
- A state we remain in until we go home to be with the Lord

"You have been saved"

SANCTIFICATION

A lifelong process

- Becoming more like Christ
- What we do for the rest of our lives

EPHESIANS

2:10

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · NORMA NORMANS

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

JOHN CALVIN · ANTIDOTE TO THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

“It is therefore faith alone which justifies[1], and yet the faith which justifies is not alone[2]

— JOHN CALVIN Acts of the Council of Trent with the Antidote · 1547

NORMED BY SCRIPTURE

[1] Eph 2:8–9 [2] Eph 2:10

THE JEWEL

The Bible teaches that good works are the result of our salvation, not the means of it.

GROUNDED IN

Ephesians 2:8–10
Romans 3:28
Galatians 2:16

THE CORE OF THE REFORMATION

Salvation by faith alone is the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Two answers to one question

ROME · COUNCIL OF TRENT, 1547

Faith and works

- Works cooperate in justification
- Tradition equal to Scripture

Authority: Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium

THE REFORMATION

Faith alone

- Works are fruit, not root
- Scripture the ultimate authority

Authority: Scripture alone

JUDE

22–23

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · ANSWERING FALSE TEACHING

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Three groups to reach

THOSE WHO DOUBT

Have mercy

Dabbling with a false gospel, but not yet converted to it.

Jude 22 I

THOSE IN THE FIRE

Snatch them

Trapped in false teaching, and perishing.

Jude 23a II

THE FALSE TEACHERS

With fear

Convincing and logical. They may even quote the Bible.

Jude 23b III

IN CONVERSATION

“What does that mean to you?”

Many don’t believe what their church officially teaches. Find out how they believe we are saved, and keep the conversation on the gospel.

WE'VE SEEN WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

What do these churches teach?

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Council of Trent

Convened 1545, in response to the Reformation

EASTERN ORTHODOXY

The Confession of Dositheus

Synod of Jerusalem, 1672

COUNCIL OF TRENT · SESSION VI, CANON 9 · STILL BINDING

If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious [an unbeliever] is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.

— COUNCIL OF TRENT 1547 · trans. J. Waterworth

CONTRADICTED BY SCRIPTURE

Eph 2:8–9 · Rom 3:28 · Rom 11:6

CONFESSION OF DOSITHEUS · STILL GOVERNING

We believe a man to be not simply justified through faith alone, but through faith which works through love, that is to say, through faith and works.

— SYNOD OF JERUSALEM 1672 · Decree 13, opening sentence

CONTRADICTED BY SCRIPTURE

Eph 2:8–9 · Rom 3:28 · Rom 11:6

ROME & ORTHODOXY

Justification: a process that begins, and **does not end until you die.**

But that is not the biblical gospel. Salvation comes by faith alone, and is completed in the moment you believe.

Ephesians 2:8

If Jesus Christ truly paid the penalty for our sin, what could my works possibly add to my justification?

It is either by faith alone, or by faith and works. It can’t be both.

THE WORD OF GOD · IT CAN'T BE MORE CLEAR

EPHESIANS

2:8–9

ESV

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

THE REAL QUESTION

By grace through faith **alone,** or by grace through faith **and works**?

Rome and Orthodoxy do teach salvation by grace through faith. Don’t get lost there.

ROMANS

11:6

ESV

THE WORD OF GOD · FUNDAMENTALLY OPPOSED

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

So, today

SOLA SCRIPTURA

I

The Safe

The doctrine we must defend to protect the saving gospel.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

SOLA FIDE

II

The Jewel

The gospel itself: salvation by faith alone, apart from works.

Ephesians 2:8–10

It is by faith **alone** in Jesus Christ **alone** that we can be saved.

That is the jewel. The core of the gospel itself.

Talk it over

1. Re-read Ephesians 2:8–10.
   a. How would you explain the relationship between works and faith in this passage?
   b. Besides the examples given, what other examples of improperly bringing works into salvation have you seen?
   c. Is it hard to believe that salvation/justification is a once completed action? Why or why not?
2. Say you knew someone who rejects the idea that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. How would you help them to see what the Bible teaches on this?

NEXT WEEK · CASE STUDY 02

THE WORD & THE WITNESS

JOHN 1:1–14

If Scripture alone is our final authority, why do we confess the creeds?



READ AHEAD

John 1:1–18
Philippians 2:5–11
Colossians 2:9

THIS WEEK
01 The Jewel & The Safe

NEXT WEEK
02 The Word & The Witness