

Kingdom thoughts

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. Hebrews 12:28

BMI Devotional May 2015

Solo scriptura vs Sola scriptura

We have been considering the tendency for today's church to neglect tradition when handling her scriptures.

This disregard — for the outcomes, doctrinal developments and faith victories of those who contended for the faith in generations past — we have referred to as a new doctrine of *solo scriptura*. This individualistic approach to scripture brings with it numerous errors and problems because:

1. Scripture itself indicates that both scripture and the interpretation of scripture belong not to the individual but the Church (1 Peter 1:20).
2. It cannot be denied that any appeal to scripture is an appeal to the *interpretation* of scripture. The Bible is not some ouija board which can be placed in the centre of a room and speak unassisted so as to instruct. Every assertion as coming from scripture is by default reference to a standard of interpretation. *Solo scriptura* means that the recognised standard is that of the individual's opinion.
3. The notion of *solo scriptura* reduces the essential doctrines of the faith to mere opinion, because it denies real authority to ecumenical creeds and denigrates godly scholarship to the status of opinion which is opinion only, and no more to be honoured than that of any individual Christian.
4. The teaching of scripture is a ministry which is ordained by the Church for the Church. Paul clearly instructs that teaching was an activity which was to continue after his death (1 Tim 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9). By denying the importance of authority as vested in scholarship and study, *solo scriptura* denies the ministry of teaching.

Every minister is expected to 'wait on their ministry' and every teacher to 'wait on their teaching' (Rom 12:7) even as the Levitical priests were to 'wait' on the Lord (Num 3:10, 8:24), but the egalitarian attitude which is the basis of *solo scriptura* holds that the consequence of such scholarly 'waitfulness' matters nothing in light of personal opinion.

5. By advocating personal opinion as equivalent to received interpretation, *solo scriptura* does not just pose one form of interpretation against another form, as when a person may choose to read the NKJV in preference to NIV or some other translation. *Solo scriptura* sets the individual against and above the Church. In this way it undermines legitimate ecclesiastical authority as established by Christ. It negates the duty to submit to those who rule over us and whose task it is to care for us and guard us against false doctrine (Heb 13:7, 9,13).

We might leave the last word to K Mathison:

Adherents to 'solo scriptura' have not understood that 'Scripture alone' doesn't mean 'me alone'. The Bible nowhere gives any hint of wanting every individual believer to decide for himself and by himself what is and is not the true meaning of Scripture. Scripture was given to the Church within a certain pre-existing doctrinal context that had been preached by the Apostles for decades. 'Solo scriptura' denies the necessity of that context and it denies the necessity of the Church. In so doing it denies Christ who established that Church and who taught doctrine to His disciples. It is rebellion in the name of God against the authority of God for the sake of preserving the authority of man.

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