

This is why classical Lutheran education is so important, the education that hands down all knowledge in service to the Christian family and the Christian Church, with the Bible at the center. The Christian who knows the Bible will want to sing it, confess it, defend it, teach it in the home, because the Bible constantly preaches Christ and He is our treasure. The Prophet Hosea told Israel, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." And the prophet Isaiah says of Christ, "By knowledge of Him, My righteous Servant shall justify many." The Bible is God speaking, and the knowledge He speaks is pure life. He speaks what is good and holy and right, what is true and beautiful, and nowhere does this Word shine more brightly than in the history of God made flesh, our Immanuel, the Creator who becomes our Brother, the Almighty who becomes the weak little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Our children will be reciting Scripture throughout our congregations this Advent season. I'm looking forward to it. There is nothing more beautiful in all the world than to hear children recite the clear Word of God. Heaven will consist in this: God's children confessing His Word. And what they confess this Advent and Christmas season, this is the basis of everything we believe and hold dear as Christians. Thank God for Holy Scripture. My prayer is that every one of you hold these words of eternal life as your greatest treasure here in time and forever in eternity.

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AD FONTES

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SOLA SCRIPTURA

BY REV. DR. CHRISTIAN PREUS

Rev. Dr. Christian Preus is chairman of the LCC Board of Regents and pastor at Mount Hope Lutheran Church in Casper, WY, a supporting congregation of LCC.

When we say we believe in *sola Scriptura*, we're saying we believe that Scripture alone, the Bible alone, is the source of our knowledge of God. The Bible is God's Word. It doesn't make mistakes. It tells us everything we need to know about God and morality and salvation. Popes, councils, pastors, they all can and do make mistakes. God can't. And so for a church to be faithful to God, it must be faithful to His Word, the Bible. Jesus and the Bible go together. You can't have one without the other.

We can point to the consequences of trying to separate the Bible and Jesus. Look at the liberal, so-called "mainstream" Protestant churches, the Episcopal Church, the PC-USA, the ELCA, the United Methodists, that denied already back in the '60s and '70s that Scripture is God's Word. Not only have they shrunk drastically in the last half century, as people leave them in droves each year, they rarely say anything about the incarnation of the Son of God, his death for sin, or his bodily resurrection from the dead, and they promote instead the social issues of the day – homosexual rights, trans rights, environmental rights, undocumented immigrant rights, and whatever else falls under the banner of social activism. That's what happens when churches abandon the Bible. They end up abandoning Jesus and His sacrifice for sinners on the cross along with it and then creating their own false gospel.

The example of every church body in America that has abandoned the Bible

as God's inerrant Word should teach us conservative Christians how important our confession of the Bible as God's pure Word really is. You lose the Bible, you lose Jesus. It starts with supposedly little things. Genesis records God creating the universe in six days. What does that have to do with Jesus? How will it affect anyone's faith in Jesus if we say God took billions of years to create the earth, not six literal days? Yet, show me the Protestant church body who replaces God's history of creating the world with the myth of evolution, and I'll show you a church body that has stopped preaching sin and the Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. It happens every single time. You pick and choose what you want to believe in the Bible, you end up denying it all. You claim that the clear words of Genesis 1, "and evening and morning were the first day" aren't clear, then the words, "Male and female He made them," aren't clear either, and Jesus' words, "It is finished," and "given and shed for the forgiveness of sins," and "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have," these won't be clear either. And we're not playing academic games here. This is no mere intellectual debate. The slippery slope that begins with denying the clarity and authority of God's Word in the smallest matter ends in slipping down into the pit of total ignorance of God and His love in Christ.

So for Christ's sake, because He speaks a clear Word, and because all His Word is interconnected truth, truth He has given us to lead us through this world of sin to Himself in heaven, we hold to the Bible alone, *sola Scriptura*.

And it's not enough simply to claim this. *Sola Scriptura* can't be a mere slogan, bumper sticker theology. I cannot count how many people I have met who instinctively have a high view of the Bible as God's Word and yet know next to nothing about what the Bible actually says, because they don't read it. And the surveys, to the delight of the Bible-bashers, reveal the same thing. People who believe the Bible is without error and the only source of teaching for Christians will then get basic questions wrong about what the Bible teaches. A common one concerns Jesus. Who is He? The popular Christian movie *God's Not Dead* is typical – a curious atheist asks a Christian student whether Jesus is God, and the Christian responds, "Well, He's God's Son." That sounds like a denial, doesn't it? It accords with the Ligonier survey of 2018, which showed a shocking 78% of self-identified evangelical Christians believed that "Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God the Father." Claiming *sola Scriptura* is not enough. Luther called the Bible *Deus*

loquens, God speaking. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," Jesus says. Reading the Bible, loving it, embracing its truth is also to embrace and ever hold fast to the God-Man Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther once called the Bible the swaddling clothes in which we find Jesus. It was easy to despise the swaddling clothes in the manger of Bethlehem, but they contained the God of the universe come to save us. So it goes with the Bible. It is so easily despised. But it contains the One whom the prophet Isaiah calls Immanuel, God with us. The baby of Bethlehem is God, the eternal Son of the Father. And He is with us, He is one of us. Why? Why would the eternal God unite our created human nature to



His eternal Person? Because God is with us to save us. He is Jesus. Jesus means the Lord saves. He looked at all the sin, all the denial of His Word, all the academically respectable myths promoted against His Word, all the depravity, the sexual perversions, the dirtiness and death of the world He had created perfect, and instead of coming to destroy it all, wipe it out with a flood or with fire from heaven, He came to take it all on Himself, to join the misery, to live it, to be the perfect Substitute for sinners, to suffer our punishment in His eternal Person, and so win for us the pardon and peace of our God.

This is why we support classical Lutheran education. The Christian Church lives by knowledge of God's Word. It thrives when Christians live on every Word that comes from the mouth of God, singing hymns of substance that confess what the Bible teaches. It thrives when fathers and mothers not only tell their children that the Bible is God's Word, but instill in their children a knowledge and love of this Bible by reading it daily. The Christian Church thrives when it knows and believes and loves God's Word.