Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Puritan Commitment to Sola Scriptura (Steve Lawson)
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Strange Fire Conference

Well, I can say if I only had one worship service to be a part of before I would go to heaven, I've just had it. I wouldn't change anything. And I just thank the Lord for the beauty of the music that we have heard played by the orchestra, by the beauty of the voices from John Martin to Philip Webb to Kory Welch, and to hear all your voices and my voice for us to all lift our voices together in singing to the Lord these hymns that we have sung and what has been selected in the way that Clayton has led us, for the Scripture that was read by Dr. MacArthur for his heart-searching and beautiful pastoral prayer…every piece of this evening has had God's blessing, I believe, upon it and we are singularly blessed of the Lord tonight to find ourselves here at Grace Community Church and to be a part of this conference.

I do want to say thank you to Kory Welch who just sang this beautiful solo of Psalm 23, I'm very humbly grateful to say that all four of my children have attended and graduated from the Master's College, three boys and one daughter. My three boys, Andrew, James and John. We are in to discipleship at the Lawson house. And then my daughter Peter (laughter) who left her net and came to the Master's College. And when she graduated, the very first job that she had and the very first job she had ever had in her entire life was to work for Kory Welch. And what a wonderful experience that was for her and she has never had a better boss to work for then Kory Welch. And I can safely say that because she now works for me.

Well tonight, the focus of our study tonight will be another historical theology overview of a critical issue that ties in wonderfully with this entire conference. And the subject that I have been asked to address and I am happy to do so and embrace it is the Puritan Commitment to *Sola Scriptura*.

Arising out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, there was sounded a trumpet blast that rallied the hearts of God's people. That trumpet blast was a clarion call known as *Sola Scriptura*, which is Latin for Scripture alone. It really served as the foundation for four other *solas*: *sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christos and sola de la Gloria.* And these five all fit together really as one statement of truth, one declaration of the true saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now think of it this way. Think of a magnificent ancient temple and a foundation upon which everything rest is *sola scriptura*, everything that we believe, everything that we obey, everything that

we embrace and hold dear in the convictions of our soul is based upon this sturdy foundation of *sola scriptura*. Rome said we accept Scripture but it is Scripture and… Scripture and church traditions, Scripture and ecclesiastical hierarchies, Scripture and the church councils, Scripture and Papal authority, and the Reformers said, coming back to the Bible, “No, it is *sola scriptura.* It is Scripture alone. And if anything else is added to the foundation of the church, it will be like…it will be cracks in the foundation and it will not hold up the teaching and the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At the same time they said no to the Anabaptists and to the Libertines who wanted to add their dreams and their visions and their new revelations and their prophetic revelations. And the Reformers said no, it is Scripture alone.

Upon this foundation are three massive pillars which really frame the gospel and uphold the gospel in its most basic and elementary proposition. *Sola gratia, sola fide, solas Christos,* salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Rome wanted to add good works and church membership and church attendance and baptism and marriage and last rites and indulgences and Mary and the treasury of merit and etc., etc., etc. And they just backed up their dump truck and kept adding and adding and adding all kinds of rubbish. And the Reformers, because they came back to the Word of God, Scripture alone, they said no, salvation the one true saving gospel is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And when that is in place, when this foundation is in place, and these three immovable sturdy pillars are in place, then the roof and the pinnacle over the hole that points upward is *sola de gloria,* for the glory of God alone. That is the entire Reformation in a nutshell. That is the entire forest in a small acorn. That is the entire matter reduced to its most minimal parts but everything resting upon *sola Scriptura*.

Now the Reformers, if you will, built a wall around this foundation. There could be no intrusion. There could be no additives, there could be nothing augmenting this pure foundation of *sola Scriptura*. After they passed off the scene, the next giants to step into a long-line of godly men were those known as the Puritans. That Puritan age really began in the middle of that same century, the sixteenth century with the ascendency of Queen Elizabeth to the throne of England and the removal of Bloody Mary from her reign of terror as she had brought back her Catholic beliefs and put to death some 288 of the greatest, finest, preachers men and women this world has ever known, and the first to be burned at the stake by Bloody Mary is the man whose picture is always in the front of my preaching Bible, John Rogers who was burned at the stake in 1555 by Bloody Mary. After Mary’s reign, it became a new day with Elizabeth on the throne and there came now the new movement known as the Puritan Movement which sought to purify within the Church of England and bring the church back to the purity of *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christos, sola de la gloria.* It was these Puritans who were so mightily used by God, few movements in church history have ever been more Bible-centered, Bible-oriented, than was the Puritan Movement.

And tonight, I want us to consider their commitment to *sola Scriptura.* And I want to do so under three headings. I want to make this simple and I want you to see where we're headed. These three headings regarding *sola scriptura*, it was defined by the Westminster Divines. Number two, it was deluded by the Quakers. And number three, it was defended by John Owen, England's Calvin. That's where we're headed. I want to begin first now with *sola scriptura* defined by the Westminster Divines. And before we begin to look at perhaps the most remarkable statement, doctrinal statement of fidelity to the written Word of God, especially its place in history, I want to set before you some distinguishing marks just out of the Scripture itself of *sola Scriptura.* In other words, before we get to church history under this heading, I want you to think with me what are those distinguishing marks out of the Bible itself, regarding *sola Scriptura,* Scripture alone.

It would have to begin, first of all, with the inspiration of Scripture. The Bible says of itself in 2 Timothy 3 verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Every jot, every tittle, every chapter, every verse, every book within the canon of Scripture is God-breathed, it has come out of the mouth of God. It was not the authors who were inspired, it was the Scripture that was inspired. The authors were merely the instruments in the hand of God who would record what He intended them to write, using their own temperaments, and their own personalities, and their own vocabulary, and drawing upon their own background and experience, they nevertheless wrote precisely what God desired them to write. Jesus said in Matthew 4 and verse 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Every word of Scripture comes out of the mouth of God. It is as though divine revelation in the Bible has come down from God above.

In Hebrews verse 12 we read, "For the Word of God is living and active." This book is alive. This book has the life of God within it because it is the very breath of God, it is inspired by God. Jesus said in John 6:63, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

Now second, not only the inspiration of Scripture but the inerrancy of Scripture is involved and included in *sola Scriptura*. And because the Bible is God-breathed, it is therefore the Word of God. And because God is holy, God cannot lie. God is truth and every word of God is true. Titus 1 verse 2 says, "God cannot lie." Are there some things that God cannot do? Yes there are. God cannot sin. God cannot deny Himself. God cannot lie. Hebrews 6 verse 18, "It is impossible for God to lie. Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Your Word is truth." Proverbs 30, verse 5, "Every Word of God is tested." And so we uphold with the Puritans as we will see in just a moment, the very inerrancy of the Word of God. Let God be found true, let every man be found a liar.

Third, the infallibility of Scripture, that all is recorded in Scripture must come to pass. The words of the Lord cannot fail. Isaiah 40 verse 8, "The grass withers, the flower fades away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever." Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 18, "Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Jesus would say, "The Scripture cannot be broken," John 10 verse 35. And then fourth, the authority of Scripture, that

because the Word of God is inspired, it is infallible, it is inerrant, it comes with the authority of God Himself. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. And when God speaks, He speaks with sovereign authority in His Word. Psalm 19 verse 7, it has already been read tonight. “The Law of the Lord is perfect.” They’re not the suggestions of the Lord. They’re not the options of the Lord. They are not the considerations of the Lord. It is the Law of the Lord and it is binding upon every man’s conscience and life. In Psalm 19 verse 8, “The commandment of the Lord is pure.” It is the very commandment of God to every man and to every woman, that is why Paul would say in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 15, “For this we say to you, by the Word of the Lord.

Fifth, its perspicuity…*sola Scriptura* means that the Word of God is clear, it is understandable, it is a lucid revelation. Matthew 22 verse 31, Jesus said to the Pharisees, “But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read?” Do you have two eyeballs? Do you have two brain cells that are connected between your ears? Can you not process the information, the clear revelation in the Word of God? In Matthew 19 and verse 4, Jesus answered and said, “Have you not read who created them from the beginning male and female?” No, God has so clearly spoken in His Word that no man can render the excuse, “Well I did not understand what God was saying. God has not stuttered in His Word. God has spoken with precision and with accuracy and it is an understandable message. We need the illumination of the Holy Spirit…yes. But any short-coming and understanding the Bible is not on the part of the Bible, it is a part…on the part of man. But what God has said, He has said with abundant clarity in His Word. And what a difference that was with Rome. Rome said the man in the pew, the woman in the pew cannot understand the Bible. That is why we will not translate it into your language. That is why the preaching will be in Latin. That is why we will tell you what to believe because you are incapable of understanding the Bible.

And the Puritans and the Reformers said no. The plowman in the field will know more of the Bible than the Pope in Rome, that the Word of God is marked by perspicuity, it is crystal-clear in those matters dealing with salvation and godly living.

Sixth, *sola Scriptura* implies the sufficiency of Scripture, that the Word of God is able to accomplish all of God’s purposes here upon the earth as the Word of God is brought to bear upon the issues in the men and individuals of this world. Isaiah 55 verse 11, God says, “My Word which goes forth from my mouth, it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, without succeeding in the manner for which I sent it. God’s redemptive purposes will be carried out in this world by the Word of God which is sufficient to do all that God desires to do in this world.”

The Word of God is powerful to convict. It is powerful to convert. It is powerful to conform. It is powerful to console. It is powerful to correct. The Word of God is powerful, it is more powerful than any other object that you and I will ever hold in our hand. Peter says, “For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding Word of God.” There is so much life in this book that when this book is planted within the soil of human hearts,

having been prepared by the Holy Spirit of God, when God by His sovereign grace causes that seed to germinate, it brings forth eternal life. And it is this book alone that sanctifies and conforms believers into the very image of Jesus Christ.

Seventh, *sola scriptura* implies the immutability of Scripture. That it will never change. It is forever the same. Psalm 119 verse 89, “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119 verse 160, “Every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.” Listen, right will always be right. Wrong will always be wrong. The way of salvation will forever be the way of salvation. God’s revelation is unchanging because God Himself is immutable and unchanging. *Sola Scripture* implies also the invincibility of Scripture, that it is a superior weapon in the hand of the man or the woman of God, as it is wielded and used. God says in Jeremiah 23:29, “Is not My Word like a fire? Declares the Lord. And like a hammer which shatters a rock.” Hebrews 4 verse 12 says, “For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.” What a powerfully penetrating instrument is the Word of the living God. It is an invincible weapon.

And finally, *sola scriptura* implies the finality of Scripture, that there is no new revelation to be given to man after the close of the canon of Scripture, that we have the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, Job…or Jude 3. Revelation 22:18, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book.” All of these truths are inherent within this statement of *sola scriptura*. And why this will be so very important for this conference and for our understanding of the Word of God, is this last element of the exclusive finality of divine revelation in the written Word of God. God has brought the consummation of His message to us in special redeeming sanctifying revelation in the truth of His written Word.

As the Puritans convened in 1643, called by the English Parliament, they were charged to write what would become the doctrinal statement that would govern the land and in 1646 they completed their draft and their ratification of the Westminster Confession of Faith. There were 121 scholars and theologians, pastors and teachers, along with another 30 key laymen. They met in over eleven hundred sessions and as they wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith, the shorter and the longer catechism, they began their Westminster Confession of Faith with chapter 1. Chapter 1 is entitled “Of the Holy Scriptures, and their doctrinal statement written those many years ago would be even more finally tuned and advanced than what had been written earlier a hundred years earlier by the Reformers. As new challenges were being brought to bear upon the church at that time, they needed to be more explicit, they needed to be more definitive in what they believed about the Scripture. And it is a doctrinal statement in this first chapter that has stood the test of time and has become a restatement of what the Bible says concerning itself.

Now, I want to walk us through a few of these statements so that you will see how…how committed the Puritans were to *sola scriptura*. And there will be some…some statements, some sentences out of it that put over my head on the screen. And I have gone through these and paired them down and

thinned them out so that they are understandable and easy to read, as they were originally written and as they stand to this day. There is a greater breadth about these sentences and these paragraphs but to aid our communication, I want you to see and to understand what the greatest Puritan minds brought together in a statement of *sola scriptura* and what I want you to note is in chapter 1, section 1, they began with a statement on the cessation of any new revelation and they were determined to state that they will believe only the Bible. So please note, in the first section of chapter 1, they saw it necessary for the preserving and propagating the truth that would make the Holy Scripture to be most necessary. In other words, it has to be written down so that the message is preserved and so that the message can be propagated far and wide with a uniformity of statement God had the Bible recorded and put into writing. It goes on to say at the end of this first section, those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being…note the last two words…now ceased." This is front-loaded at the very outset of the Westminster Confession of Faith. There is no room for any wiggle room whatsoever, these Puritan Divines who gathered perhaps the greatest generation of believers who have gathered in the United Kingdom, they began with this cessationist statement. In section two, they speak of the inspiration and the authority of Scripture. And number 2, "All holy scriptures which are given by inspiration of God." Not God and man, not inspiration by man, but inspiration of God. It would be 100 percent the pure, unadulterated, unvarnished truth of the mind and the will of God revealed to man.

And then it concludes to be the rule of faith and life. Please note that word "rule." That it has the authority over our lives to rule us, to govern us, to dictate to us which we gladly would submit to. In the third section, they were careful to state that the Apocrypha are not included in the canon of Scripture. The book's commonly called Apocrypha are no part of the canon of Scripture, they confined this divine inspiration, they recognized that it was…that it is contained within the 66 books of the Bible, 39 in the Old, 27 in the New.

The fourth section reads, "The authority of the Holy Scripture ought to be believed and obeyed." Again it is a statement of the authority of the word of God. And its ruling power over the lives of men and women. In the sixth section we read of its sufficiency. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary. Did you hear that? All things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life is in Scripture. There's no need to look anywhere else. There is no need for anything else to be added. There is no need for any appendixes to be supplementing the divine revelation in the written Word of God. They affirm the scriptures that I have already read to you that all things necessary for salvation and sanctification for the glory of God is found in our Bible. This is a very important point. And at the end of this presentation, John Owen will be the one who will step in to answer the threat of the Quakers and he will build his case upon the perfection and the sufficiency of the Word of God when he will say, "Away with your dreams and visions, away with your new revelations, we have the all-sufficient written Word of God.

In this sixth section, also, is another cessationist statement. It says nothing…you understand what nothing means…nothing at any time…you understand what any time means…is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men, do not be bringing your thus says the Lord into this house if it's not found in chapter and verse. And I know that's a reflection of your own heart and your commitment to the written Word of God. Number 7 and 9 deal with the perspicuity of Scripture, how abundantly clear this book is. Note number 7, "Those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some sense of Scripture or other." Everything that you need to know to be saved is clearly stated in the Bible. Everything you need to know to follow the will of God is clearly stated in this book. Everything that you need to know to live in such a way to bring honor and glory to God is spelled out with crystal-clear clarity in this book. Listen, this book is not hard to understand, it's just hard to swallow. What part of by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, how does that get over your head? Why even a child can come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Now notice what they go on to say in this same section in 7, that not only the learned but the unlearned. Both the prince and the pauper may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. If there is any veil, it is not over the Scripture, the veil is over the darkened minds of men. And section 9 continuing with this perspicuity, the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. What that is saying is Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. And if something is unclear in one place, it is abundantly clear in another place and these clear passages shine light on the unclear passages because the Bible never contradicts itself, it speaks with only one voice, Thomas Watson, my favorite Puritan perhaps, said, "Only a diamond can cut a diamond, Scripture interprets Scripture."

And then finally, number 10 is a final summation in this first chapter on the authority of the Word of God and just to nail this down, they said the supreme judge by which all controversies are to be determined and are to be examined, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. Not speaking in your revelations, not speaking in your dreams and visions, not speaking in your tongues, speaking in the Scripture alone and the Word of God will be the highest arbitrator of all matters in the life of the church.

This is the commitment of the Puritans in 1646 as they drafted this extraordinary document after meeting over eleven hundred times, over the course of those three years, as they took their stand on the Word of God. The church has always been the strongest when it takes this stand on the Word of God. This is always the high ground in every era of church history when the church stands firmly upon *sola scriptura*. And if the church takes one step off of *sola scriptura*, she puts her foot on the slippery slope and it is a matter of time until she descends downward into liberalism, into ecumenicalism until she comes down to Agnosticism, ultimately to Atheism, the high ground is *sola scriptura*.

Every denomination that goes astray goes astray at this point. Every seminary that goes astray, goes astray at this point. Every church that goes astray goes astray at this point. Every denomination, every seminary, and every church that is strong in the grace of God is strong in being anchored upon *sola scriptura.* It is non-negotiable. We're not just dogmatic about this, we'll bulldog-matic about this. (Applause) The Word of God is not up for debate.

Now second, not only defined by the Westminster Divines, but second, I want you to note sadly deluded by the Quakers. Whenever God opens the windows of heaven to bless His people, the devil opens the gates of hell to blast. And whenever God is doing His greatest work, you can be sure that the devil is right there to bring in his counterfeit religion. And while the Puritans were meeting in Westminster in the 1640's at exactly that same time, exactly that same time, virtually across town the devil was doing his work. And at the same time there arose in the sixteen forties, a fringe group that would come to be known as the Quakers. This radical sect was also known as the Religious Society of Friends. And they claimed to be receiving new revelations. They claimed to be receiving prophecies. And with that, they were being led astray into hyper emotionalism and into mysticism and that is where it always leads when you pull up anchor from *sola scriptura*.

They were led by a man named George Fox and they organized and had their first meeting in 1652. And at the heart of the Quaker theology was this message that one can be saved apart from the Scripture. That there is an inner light in all man. And this inner revelation makes salvation for all humanity possible. They call this Light Within the Indwelling Spirit. And they claim that the Spirit was even in unbelievers and as they gathered together as unbelievers, they claimed that they had the Holy Spirit within them. And to walk into a Quaker worship service, there was not an ordained pastor, no one would step into the pulpit with the Word of God and expound and proclaim the written Word of God. They would all sit in a building like we're sitting and they would be encouraged to meditate. And as you would feel prompted, you may just stand up and speak and give direction to everyone else's lives. Women were encouraged to stand up as well and to preach to the men. And out of this commitment, to be open and un-cautious to continuing revelation by the spirit they were led into all kinds of mystical experiences and bizarre patterns, not the least of which was going naked as a sign….a sign of judgment. And in June of 1654, two Quaker women, Elizabeth Fletcher and Elizabeth Levins(?), visited Oxford in order to bring the Quaker message to the University town. These two women began to preach to the Student Body at Oxford to warn the students of the evils of study and to give their minds to the intellectual world of academia, and to the study of the Bible, and they sought to persuade them that all they needed was the inner light given by the Holy Spirit. They did not need the library, they did not need the classroom, they did not need their professors, God would just speak to them inside their spirit.

That message fell on deaf ears. One of these women unclothed herself, walked around Oxford half naked, bare-breasted, claiming it was a sign of judgment against the hypocritical students. Such a bizarre act, clearly shows the inherent tendency in their Movement to exalt what they thought was the

Holy Spirit but to go off into bizarre irrational, illogical patterns of behavior. But what is more bizarre than running around half naked is the outlandish claims and freakish actions of so man in today's Charismatic Movement. What we just saw paraded before our eyes today during the question and answer is even more bizarre in my estimation than these women who took off their clothes and walked around naked. Listen to Marilyn Hickey, TBN televangelist, one of the guest speakers at the International Charismatic Bible Conference, there's an oxymoron for you. And I quote, "What do you need? Start creating it. Start speaking about it. Start speaking it into being. Speak to your billfold, say, 'You big thick billfold, full of money.'" I'll give you the footnote on this, if you want. "Speak to your checkbook. Say, 'You checkbook, you.'" I told you, this is beyond going naked. You checkbook you, you've never been so prosperous since I owned you, you're just jammed full of money, aren't you?'" Well that's not all that was jammed full of something.

Kenneth Copeland, you talk about bizarre. You don't have a god in you, you are one. Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're god. Pray to yourself. That is beyond running around naked. You have the same creative faith and ability on the inside of you that God used when He created the heavens and the earth. Yeah, just create your own little universe for you to live in. Your own little fantasy world. Kenneth Copeland said, "God is a being that stands somewhere around six foot two inches tall. There's a high view of God for you. He said, "I don't preach doctrine." Well we believe you on that. I mean, we're walking forward on that one. "I don't preach doctrine, I preach faith." Yeah, faith in yourself and faith in the devil. Kenneth Hagen says, "The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus Christ." Fred Price I this town says, "Have a Rolls Royce faith." And Benny Hinn says, "Are you ready for some real revelation knowledge? You are God." He said, "Christians are little Messiahs, Christians are like gods." He said, "Never ever ever go to the Lord and say, 'If it be Thy will.'" He said, "We Christians possess power in our mouths to heal or kill just as witches possess it." You're right on that one. And he said, "We are little Messiahs, everything that Jesus ever was."

I'm telling you, you take one step off of *sola scriptura*, you take one step off of *sola scriptura* and you have put your foot on a theological banana peel, you are on a slippery slope, it is inevitable you are headed down, down, down until you crash at the bottom. That's what this Quaker Movement was about. And there was a reason why they called them Quakers because in their services they're given to all of this shaking, in fact, as they came to the colonies, some places in the Midwest they were actually called shakers.

This leads me to number three, *sola scriptura* defended by John Owen. It was by no coincidence that on that very same campus at Oxford University, sitting as the vice chancellor, placed there by Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protectorate of England, presiding over all the academia of the prestigious Oxford University, the towering intellect and a theological genius of John Owen. God had him there. And if anyone could dissect Quaker theology, it would be the great Puritan John Owen. It was John Owen who would become the personal chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. It would be John Owen who would preach to Parliament. It would be John Owen the day after Charles I had his head cut off and the end

of the monarchy, John Owen addressed Parliament. This brilliant man whose theological writings now take up 23 volumes in a pastor's study, gave himself to combat this Charismatic emotional departure from *sola scriptura* with its new revelations and John Owen affirmed the deeper issue which was *sola scriptura*. He cut through the chase, he got to the bottom line and tried to…and did address this issue of *sola scriptura*. It would be in 1659 that Owen responded to this Quaker affront by writing one of his most important works, the title of it is *A Defense of Sacred Scripture Against the Fanatics.* Chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4, I want to zone in on chapter 3. The title of chapter 3 is "On the perfection of Scripture." And John Owen will state his case for the lunacy of these Charismatic excesses based upon the sure foundation of the perfection of the Word of God. John Calvin a century earlier as we looked at yesterday, would address this very same issue with the Libertines and with the Anabaptists with theological persu…precision by tying together the Word and the Spirit and the apostolic issue and that miracles would accompany the Apostles because new revelation was given. John Owen would take his stand upon a different defense. He chose to argue the perfection of the written Word of God as it is from Genesis to Revelation that it has everything that the church and everything that any believer would ever need in their spiritual lives to have revelation from God, it is already in the Bible. There is nothing to be added, it is perfect as it stands. And any attempt to add or to augment to the written Word of God is actually an attack against the perfection of Scripture. And John Owen began his defense with this statement, and I've distilled it down, and trust me, these are lengthy, full sentences and weighty paragraphs and I've distilled it down to make it easy for us to process.

He writes: "The Scriptures are the settled, that means immutable, eternal, unchangeable, ordinary as opposed to extraordinary revelation. These are the ordinary means of grace. Perfect, meaning it cannot be improved on, nothing is lacking in the Word of God, and unshakable rule. In every generation, on every continent, in every age and every place for every church and for every believer, for divine worship, which is Dr. MacArthur has explained in this conference is our highest duty before God, leaves no room…you understand what no room means?...no room for any new revelations. And if you are seeking any of these Charismatic, new revelations, it is because you have no understanding of the perfection of the written Word of God. John Owen then, as he mounts his defense, says, "What is the practical use for Scripture?" Meaning, what good is it to us? "If it is so incomplete as to need poor mortal men to be continually adding to it where is its perfection?" And the answer would have to be, if you're trying to add to it, you are making a statement that it is not perfect already but it claims to be perfect. It claims to be inspired and inerrant and sufficient for all of God's purposes. John Owen then lists seven consecutive paragraphs and I've reduced these down, as he walks through and this treatise a defense of the sacred Scripture against the fanatics. Number one, "God has revealed in the Bible everything that is needed for our salvation and to enable us to worship Him." That is the sufficiency of Scripture. Everything that you need under the ministry of the Holy Spirit is found in your written Bible to lead you to Christ and to lead you to Godliness and to led you on to heaven.

Number two, a statement on the perspicuity of Scripture, All of this is revealed in the books of the Bible where they're expressly laid out there or deductible. In other words, it's either explicit or implicit but it is stated in Scripture and it is done so in a very clear fashion. In other words, God knows how to communicate. God can communicate better than anyone in this room. And what God has said in His Word is abundantly clear in the important matters of salvation and holiness.

Number three, there is absolutely no room for new revelations. That's exactly how the book of Revelation concludes in Revelation 22:18 that if anyone adds to this book the plagues written in this book will be added to them. That is a serious indictment and warning that God places for anyone to add Revelation to the consummation of the revelation in the written Word of God. There is absolutely no room for new revelations, for our salvation and the acceptable worship of God.

Number four, he says it is most supreme arrogance and pride for mere men to propose novel matters of faith or practice not revealed by God Himself in His Word. He says it is the epitome of arrogance and pride as if you need some special private revelation like you're someone really special that you're better than everyone else in the world that just has to operate by the Bible that you think you are so special that God would have to give you a private little mystical revelation just for you, how self-centered you are, it is arrogance, it is pride. No, what God has said to everyone He says to you.

Number five, as the teachings of the fanatics, that is those given to these new revelations and these hyper emotional excesses as the teachings of the fanatics contain matter alien to the Scriptures. This is Owen's counsel to his generation. Shun them.as diabolical, useless, groundless, and false. It's from the devil and you don't need what he's selling.

Number six, this inner light, this supposed inner intuitive subjective message from the Holy Spirit in you, not coming through the written Word of God, Owen says, would divert attention from the perfection of the Bible. It's just going to draw you away into a fantasy world. It's going to pull you away from where you need to be setting your anchor in the written Word of God, it is going to bring you over here into that which is useless and false.

Number seven, the Bible is a complete and perfect rule. Since the completion of the canon of Scripture, there are no new revelations, none are to be expected or admitted. He is closing the door, shut and locking it on any new revelations. And then he adds, if the Scriptures are perfect and complete, and they are, if the Scriptures are perfect and complete, then what need do we have for new revelations and uncontrolled enthusiasm? That is a rhetorical question, the answer of which is so obvious, Owen doesn't even bother to answer his own question, it is a rhetorical question. The answer is zero.

And then finally, all these ways referring to the abuses of the Quakers in this inner light, new revelation, mystical intuitive, subjective impulses are uncertain, dangerous, useless and totally unnecessary. They must be rejected and shunned.

One man who I wrote…who I read on this who has written the preface to this defense of sacred Scripture against the fanatic Steven Westcott(?) says, “John Owen was to view the scene of the church today, if he was to see the craving and the lusting for new revelation beyond the Bible, he says it would all come back to the root cause of being unpersuaded of the perfection of the written Word of God.

Sixteen sixty-two is a year that will live in infamy in church history. It was in 1662, two years after Charles II came back to restore the monarchy in England, as the Puritans are trying to purify the Church of England and spread its influence of *sola scriptura* throughout the United Kingdom, the English Parliament passed the act of uniformity that every preacher in the Church of England must subscribe to the prescribed public prayers and ways of worshiping God and you must sign on and the Puritans’ conscience as bound to *sola scriptura*, they could not violate their own conscience. And on August twenty-fourth, 1662, one of the darkest days in all of church history, two thousand Puritan preachers were put out of their pulpits in what is known as the Great Ejection. They were forced out of their ministries, forced out of their churches, forced out of their pulpits and then two years later the convetical(???) act was passed by Parliament, that banned these preachers from even preaching in private homes or in open fields and then the next year they passed the five-mile act that barred these ejected ministers from even coming within five miles of any city. And when it would come time for them to die, even their bodies could not be buried within the city limits, or within the church cemeteries.

Whenever I go to London, the first place I go is to Smithfield, one, to stand where John Rogers was burned at the stake by Bloody Mary, and then the very short distance to Bun hill(?) Fields where the Puritans were buried outside the city limits. It was a sign of rejection, it was a sign of reputation. They were considered as Christ crucified outside the city. Bun hill Field is now within the city of London, but in that day it was an ignominious sign of total rejection. And as you walk in to Bun Hill Fields, there you see the tomb of John Owen. John Owen D.D., doctor of Divinity. There you see the tomb of John Bunyan who wrote that classic *Pilgrim’s Progress*. There you see the tomb of Isaac Watts, we heard that great hymn sung tonight, “When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my greatest gain I count by loss.” There he lays. Thomas Goodwin, other Puritan giants, many of whom have no headstones who were just stacked one upon another, upon another, upon another as they died in anonymity. They were willing to pledge their life and their death on *sola scriptura*. May we here tonight have a cessation clause in our personal statement of faith. May we be not given to the excesses of this age, may we stand on the Word of God and the Word of God alone, and may the Word of God regulate and rule the entirety of our lives. May the Word of God regulate our preaching of the Word. May it regulate our worship of God. May it regulate our fellowship with one another. May

the Word of God regulate our daily lives. May the Word of God regulate our ministries, and may the Word of God regulate our steps as we hasten to the grave. And may the Word of God and the Word of God only be our rule of faith and our standard for what is true in this world. May God give us much grace to stand upon the Word of God. Let us pray.

Father, I pray that You would work within our hearts, that we would be found a faithful generation here upon the earth. Lord, we desire to be a part of a remnant that will remain true to the book and to the book alone. Lord, I pray that You would give us insight and understanding from the Scriptures that we have looked at tonight, from its inerrancy to its infallibility, to its inspiration, to its sufficiency, to its immutability, all the way down to its invincibility and its finality. And, God, may You make us mighty in the Word and not simply to be committed to the Word, but may we confess the Word, may we preach the Word, may we proclaim the Word, share the Word, sing the Word, counsel with the Word, may we follow the Word and embrace its teaching because it is a lamp unto our feet, it is a light unto our path, it is a fire in our bones, it is the sword of the Spirit at our side. O God, thank You that You have entrusted to such pilgrims, strangers and aliens in this world, such a treasure to us as Your perfect written Word, for it tells us of our perfect living Savior, the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is in His name that we pray. Amen.

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