

TITLE: Responding to the Word of Grace (Part 2)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:23a

THEME: The Believer's Response to the Word of God (the Gospel of Christ)

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Prayer . . .

My Appreciation for the Reformation

As I have grown in my faith & ministry I have grown in my love for and appreciation of the 16th c. Reformation. In such a picturesque way, we as Xns stand upon t/shoulders of men such as Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin, Knox - Men who were used so wonderfully of God to shed saving light into the horrible darkness that enshrouded t/CH.

That light came from a belief that is known to us as *sola scriptura*

Latin phrase that means, "Scripture Alone." Bible is t/final authority & for t/faith & practice of t/CH. ("formal principle of the Reformation").

That didn't mean that Scripture was the only authority

Doctrine of Sola Scriptura has in modern evangelicalism been transformed into Solo Scriptura.

As it relates to the Authority of the Bible there are 4 views:

Historic View

Holds that the Bible is God's inspired record of t/oral traditions & teaching of the CH. Tradition has authority in as much as it is reflected in t/Bible. IOW - t/Apostles taught what we see in t/NT before it was written.

Once it was written that doctrine/Gospel tradition has been preserved for us as inspired/inerrant truth. Bible - Historical Tradition behind the Bible are the same. IOW - there's no substantial difference between what t/Apostles taught (Acts 2:42) & what we have in our Bibles. This is t/historic Xn position.

Early Roman Catholic View

Sees tradition (CH) & Scripture as equally valid. Teaching of the Rom. CH & t/Teaching of t/Bible have t/same authority. However, t/CH's authority continues and changes in t/continuing traditions & teaching of t/CH. Not static. Not limited to what t/Bible teaches. That is, t/CH can teach something that has no historical basis in t/Bible at all, but it's just as authoritative as if it were in t/Bible.

Allegorical Interpretation

This approach became necessary once t/medieval practice of allegorical interpretation fell out of acceptance. Prior to that you could allegorize t/Bible & make it say whatever you wanted it say. RC CH supported many of its doctrines w/allegorical interpretation. Once that method of interpreting t/Bible was removed, what do you do w/those doctrines. You've just pulled t/rug out from under them. Now, since you cannot appeal to t/authority of t/Bible you appeal to t/authority of t/CH. The CH teaches it, therefore it is true regardless of what t/Bible says.

One author puts it this way ==>

"Many medieval doctrines and practices that had been defended from Scripture on the basis of an allegorical method of interpretation were indefensible if Scripture was interpreted more literally. In order to defend the [apostolic authority] of some of these doctrines and practices, a second source of apostolic revelation was [accepted]."

That is, t/institution of t/CH has as much authority to propose & write & define doctrine as t/Bible does.

In this view, both t/Bible & tradition are equal authorities, BUT they don't have to match each other. If t/traditional teaching of t/CH & t/correct interpretation of t/Bible don't agree, that's perfectly acceptable.

BTW - This view of t/Bible's authority was made official RC doctrine at 16th c. counter-reformation council of Trent.

Modern Roman Catholic View

MRCV has moved even further in embracing tradition as t/ultimate, final authority to where now, tradition has superceded t/Bible as a source for truth. This is quite evident in t/modern doctrines that t/Roman CH has embraced (immaculate conception of Mary, 1850; definition of t/infallibility of t/Pope, 1870; bodily assumption of Mary, 1950).

Rome has been slowly moving from 2 authorities (Bible & t/CH) to 1 (CH alone). It is becoming "sola ecclessia" & whatever t/CH upholds yesterday, today, even tomorrow, is t/final authority, t/Bible notwithstanding. (sometimes called t/teaching Magisterium of t/CH).

Much of this is based on t/assumption that t/Bible gets its authority from t/CH. Listen: t/Bible doesn't get it's authority from t/CH. It is authoritative regardless of t/CH. It gets its authority from the fact that it is God's inspired Word. It's authority is God Himself. It doesn't get its authority from t/CH. How can t/CH be in a higher authority than God?

Solo Scriptura View

(I mentioned before). Common among evangelicals today & is often confused w/the Reformation's return to "sola scriptura." Solo Scriptura makes t/individ. reader t/final authority as it relates to t/interp. of t/Bible. So t/private judgement of one person is greater than t/corporate judgment of t/entire CH (CH in this context being all true believers everywhere).

Those who hold to Solo Script. says things like, *"Forget what t/CH teaches; forget t/early CH creeds; Forget what t/elders/pastors teach/preach. That's irrelevant; you read t/Bible for yourself & interp. for yourself as if those other things don't even exist."* Listen, that's not t/biblical or t/reformation position (not Sola Scriptura). We aren't all rugged individualists who come to t/Bible as a tabula rasa, a blank slate to get out of it whatever we think is right regardless of what t/CH has upheld over t/centuries.

Why I've said many times, if I come up w/some unique interpretation of a major doctrine that no one has ever believed in t/history of t/CH, please remove me from t/pulpit, take away my possessions, & drop me off in some shelter in downtown Rochester never to be heard from again.

In fact, this doctrine of "solo scriptura" has been t/rallying cry for all sorts of abhorrent teaching. Theological liberals of t/past 2 c. have used it to exalt human reasoning over t/authority of accepted Xn doctrine.

The Liberal Universalist churchman A.B. Grosh said that ["The Bible is our only acknowledged creed book"](#) and used his statement to support his heretical teachings; doctrines that t/CH has rejected t/o it's history. [quote from [After Darkness, Light](#) R.C. Sproul, Jr. Gen Ed., p. 39]

Another liberal theologian, Simon Howard argued that men should ["lay aside all attachment to human systems, all partiality of names, councils and churches, and honestly inquire 'what saith the Scriptures.'"](#)

Unitarian Noah Worcester declared that Xns would reject t/Trinity if they would simply study t/Bible apart from t/creeds of t/CH.

Liberal preacher Charles Beecher denounced what he called "creed power" and called for ["the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible."](#) [above quotes, [ibid](#)]

This view that totally disconnects t/Bible from any CH authority has been t/olly of heretics & wackos. We see that today in evangelicalism.

It's evident whenever someone says, "This is what the Bible means to me and I don't care what t/CH has taught t/o it's history."

It's even evident in scholarly circles w/new found doctrines such as t/"Openness of God." – a unique evangelical contribution to heresy that denies t/historically accepted and defined doctrine of God's omniscience. IOW - they say that God doesn't exhaustively know t/future. Some things take him by surprise.

Can't upset t/apple cart of CH teaching w/the sour apple of your tiny, worm-infested brain!

New and improved might be a good thing for laundry detergent; it's a dangerous contribution to understanding what t/Bible teaches.

Sola Scriptura ==>

holds to the final and absolute authority of t/Bible, but that authority is stewarded by t/CH of JC (I'm talking about t/elect company of believers).

Why I believe that the early creeds of t/CH have their place & have authority. Creeds such as the: Apostles' Creed (upheld t/basic doctrine of t/Apostles); Nicene Creed - 325 (Is Jesus, as God, equal with the Father?); Constantinople - 381 (upheld Nicea & also clarified t/deity of t/HS); Chalcedon - 451 (was Jesus fully human and fully God; what does that mean?); Council of Orange - 529 (dealt w/the issue of human sin & depravity & sided w/Augustine over t/heretic Pelagius).

Only reason why they have authority is because they reflect & support t/teaching of JC & t/Apostles w/i t/context of t/1st c. CH.

The church itself does have authority

CH has t/authority to proclaim, teach, & preach that Word. The CH has authority in maintaining t/purity of t/doctrines of that Word.

2 Tim. 1:14 - Guard through the Holy Spirit the treasure you have.

1 Timothy 3:15 - The CH is the pillar and support of t/truth

T/CH has authority to defend & define doctrine; it doesn't have t/authority to create new doctrines. T/doctrine we define and defend is t/doctrine of t/Bible // X // Apostles // 1st c. CH // THE TRUE CH t/o all history.

Why men such as Luther & Calvin weren't inventing something new. They based their belief on Scripture, but they also appealed to t/authority of t/early CH & men such as Augustine. Why? Because t/Reformers knew that they weren't inventing something new. No, they were returning to something that had been established in t/CH & taught by Scripture.

Another reason why you can't take the Bible and throw away the church

T/two have been joined together. If you think you can be a perfectly obedient Xn & reject t/local CH, sitting at home reading your Bible, you are sadly mistaken. In fact, you are in grave error.

I say all of this because we need to join ranks with the minority of churches around the world who understand and uphold the authority & sufficiency of the Bible.

Today -

Problem isn't as much with t/authority part as it is w/sufficiency. Most evangelical CHs in town uphold t/authority of t/Bible. Unfort. for most it's written on CH doctrinal statements safely tucked away somewhere in

By-Laws that no one bothers to read. When you look at t/practice of t/CH you find that what they do contradicts what they say they believe. IOW - if you believe t/Bible is perfectly sufficient then you are going to teach and follow it. Unfort. too many CH's focus on human ingenuity, marketing & entertainment – & neglect what t/Bible teaches in whole or in part.

This passage in 1 Peter speaks Sola Scriptura. Both Authority and sufficiency. (Very long introduction!)

Read Passage {***Don't pray afterward***}

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

How are we as believers in JC, as t/CH of JC, as those who uphold sola scriptura; how are we to respond w/our lives to that precious word.

Responding to the Word of Grace Will Bring God's Blessing
in Your Spiritual Race.

First ==>

A. Rekindle Your Love for the Brethren (22) "*What is the Measure of my Love?*"

Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love each other from a pure heart.

1. It is a given that as Christians we will love each other

We saw that in 1 John. Very definition of true Xn (as opposed to a sham Xn) is that he/she loves t/brethren ==>

1 John 3:14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren . . .**

Another way of saying that t/result of genuine salvation is love for other believers. BUT that doesn't mean we have arrived. That love needs to be maintained // rekindled.

2. We need to remember that our salvation is the fuel for the fire of brotherly love

That's what Peter is saying==>

Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth . . .

That's your salvation! Your (ψυχη) "soul" HAS BEEN purified.

a. Purified for a purpose

That purification, that gift of salvation fuels our love for each other==>

Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth [for what??]

for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love each other from a pure heart.

Listen, we have been sovereignly saved by our Savior so that we will love one another.

3. Four characteristics of this kind of love: sincere; brotherly; fervent; pure

a. First: Our love is to be sincere

This is another way of saying that it is to be "non-hypocritical." We're not play-acting, mouthing the words & mimicking the actions "gee, because we're supposed to."

Sometimes I wonder how sincere our love is when we have a "take it or leave it" attitude toward each other. It always gives me pause when I see someone come into t/CH. Embrace everyone, "Oh, I really love you; I love this CH; I love t/people." Then that lasts about a year, give or take. Sometimes our love has t/constitution of a Hollywood marriage! We meet, we love each other, we take pictures & feed each other cake, then we have our first misunderstanding & we're off to another CH where we start t/whole process over again. It's CH love Liz Taylor style!

Andrew Jackson was our nation's 7th President. Before his stint in politics he served in t/US military as major general in the Tennessee militia. During the war of 1812 his troops reached an all time low in morale. They began to fight and bicker among each other. No longer able to endure the squabbling, Old Hickory as Jackson was known, called his men together, pointed outward and shouted, "Let's remember, the enemy is over there!"

b. Second: Our love is to be brotherly

[it's] a sincere love of the brethren . . . ("love of the brethren" = 1 word)
Vulgate translates it w/the word fraternitalis ("frah-terni-talis") -fraternity.

(1) That's the idea - it's the word φιλαδέλφια (brotherly love)

Oxford scholar Robin Lane Fox, in his book Pagans and Christians wrote:
"To the poor, the widows and orphans, Christians gave [money] and support, [as did] the synagogues communities, their forerunners. This "brotherly love" has been [overlooked] as a reason for [sinners] turning to the church, as if only those who were members could know of it. In fact, [this love] was widely recognized. When Christians were in prison, fellow Christians gathered to bring them food and comforts; Lucian, the pagan satirist, was well aware of this practice. [the early church father, Tertullian said] that When Christians were brought to die in the arena, the crowds . . . would shout, "Look how these Christians love one another." "Christian" love was public knowledge and must have played its part in drawing outsiders to the faith." [Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians (Harper & Row, 1986), p. 324]

That's what Jesus said in John 13:35 {quote}

c. Third: Our love is to be fervent

(1) ἔκτενῶς – comes from the verb τεύω, *to stretch*

Intense strain, It's being stretched as if on a torture rack. Let's be honest, loving some people is like that!

It's to be passionate, but not only passionate, also consistent. It's t/kind of love that has an intensity about it. It goes t/distance, it lasts. It's not shallow sentimentality; it's a love w/depth.

I try to keep up with t/other Xns I have served w/in other CHs over t/course of my ministry. I genuinely care about them. I try to send B-day notes; I try to stay in touch by way of Email or phone. It saddens me to lose touch w/some of them. They're my brethren & I do love them. To love t/CH transcends loving t/concept; it's a love for other believers. I hope you sense that love that I have for you, even if I fall far short it demonstrating it sometimes.

[we have been redeemed] for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love each other from a pure heart.

d. Last: Our love is to be pure (from a pure heart)

a. This is the kind of love defined in 1 Corinthians 13

How many of these characteristics (sincere, brotherly, fervent, pure in heart) can you find in t/words of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 ==>

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.8 Love never fails;

Wraps up the idea of what it means to have a love that's sincere, brotherly, fervent, and pure in heart.

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

Responding to the Word of Grace Will Bring God's Blessing in Your Spiritual Race.

A. Rekindle Your Love for the Brethren (22) "What is the Measure of my Love?"

B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25) "What is my Perspective on Scripture?"

Remember your response to God's Word, the Gospel. Ask yourself, "What is my perspective, my belief, as it relates to t/Bible & t/message of t/Bible?" What did that message do for me?

-1. Verses 22-25 are all about remembering past events

There's only one present tense command & that's in v. 22 "Fervently love on another." The rest of it is designed to bring a recollection of the past.

-a. Verse 22:

You have purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren (perfect tense)

-b. Verse 23:

You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and enduring Word of God.
(another perfect tense)

-c. Verse 25:

And this is the Word which was preached to you. (aorist tense)
In the past you heard t/message of the Gospel & responded in faith.

B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25)

There are three things we are to remember in this passage ==>

1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)

2. Remember the Nature of the Word that Saved You (23b-25a)

3. Remember the Preaching of the Word that Saved You (25b)

1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)

You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and abiding Word of God.

a. NASB/NIV adds the word "For" (FOR you have been born again . . .)

Implied idea. Further reminder of t/fact that we have been saved to love each other. IOW - verse 23e is an extension of t/thought of v. 22 {restate}

1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)

Thought is that you have been born again through an imperishable seed and that seed is God's Word or the Gospel.

b. Peter begins by reminding us of that fact of our salvation

You have been born again . . .

This is saying t/same thing that t/beginning of v. 22 says ==>

Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth . . .

They're t/same thing. To purify your souls by obed. to t/truth is to have been B.A. & to be B.A. is to have P.Y.S.B.O.T.T.T. V. 22 emphasizes our response when we believed; V. 23 emphasizes God's sovereignty in eliciting that response.

c. God birthed us

(1) ἀναγενναω – (γενναω - to birth or beget; ἀνα - again)

We saw this back in verse 3

1. The Elements of the Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation (3-9)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again . . .

1. Note that: He has "caused us to be born again"

That's a doctrine of grace - He caused us to be born again (why it's grace)

2. "Born once die twice, born twice die once"

Our 1st birth gave us t/image of the 1st Adam, a fallen man. Our 2nd birth gives us t/image of the 2nd Adam, JC t/righteous. To be born once is to be born into a curse of death. To be born again is to be born unto a blessing: a living hope and an eternal inheritance (v. 4).

d. To be born again is to be regenerated by God's sovereign grace

This is regeneration; It's t/work of salvation that God births by transforming our dead hearts into those that are alive to Him.

(1) Here's the process

We are born separated from God in our sin. We are lost and hell-bound. We hear t/message of t/Gospel, that God is holy, that we are lost, that God has provided in JC a perfect substitute/sacrifice for sinners. JC is God & man. He is, therefore, the perfect representative for man to God. He lived a perfect, sinless life & died an undeserved death on t/cross as God placed t/sin of His elect upon Him. He was resurrected t/3rd day. The Gospel is the good news that if I turn from my sin and believe in JC as my Lord and Savior I have eternal life.

That's t/message. But that only gets it to my ears. Many people hear that message & it never gets from t/ears to the heart. It won't apart from t/work of God in regenerating t/heart. I hear that & suddenly a light goes on in my head. *"That's for me!" "I am a lost sinner. I do deserve God's*

wrath. I have offended t/God of t/universe. I want to be right w/Him. I do repent and believe."

That is a work of God in t/heart. That's regeneration; that's being B.A. I was born once physically; now I am born spiritually.

(1) That work is all of God by His grace

IOW - God does it. It's all of him.

"The new birth is monergistic; it is solely a work of the Holy Spirit. Sinners do not cooperate in their spiritual births (cf. Eph. 2:1-10) anymore than infants cooperate in their spiritual births." [MacArthur, 92]

Colossians 2:13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

John 1:12-13 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Same thing in James 1:18==>

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

In Jeremiah 13:23 OT prophet Jeremiah asks a rhetorical question ==> "Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? (what's the answer class?).

ISW - Sinful man cannot of his own will change his sinful nature.

We who are sinful cannot change our nature. We are born into sin // fallen // depraved. We can't change that, only God can do that. This is regeneration; New Birth.

This is as much a creative activity of God as was t/creation of the universe.

God created the world by the power of his word. God spoke and it existed. God recreated you in Christ through that same power - the power of His Word. God spoke to your heart and you believed.

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You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and abiding Word of God.

No one comes to X apart from that word/message. How about you?

{Invitation . . . }