

Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

- Scripture is a living book. It is from the living God.
- The truth of that verse was powerfully shown during the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation was God-sparked revival that shook the Roman Catholic Church to its core, causing the collapse of a corrupt religious system and permanently altering the course of Western civilization.
- Reformers such as Martin Luther coined the term “evangelical.” An evangelical was one who embraced two truths: sola scriptura and sola fide.
- Roman Catholicism often claims that its doctrines date back to the early church. However, Rome rejects the doctrine of sola scriptura
- The Catholic Catechism teaches:

In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority. Indeed, the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time (CCC #77).

- Rome’s authority lies not only in Scripture, but in this succession worked out in “tradition.”

This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes. The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and her prayer (CCC #78).

¹ Adapted from The Master’s Seminary, Historical Theology Course, by Nathan Busenitz (by permission).

- What does Scripture teach about sola scriptura? Did the early church affirm sola scriptura? Can Rome legitimately lay claim to falling in line with the NT Scriptures and the early church fathers?
- The Reformation was a break from Rome, necessarily. But the Reformation was not the time in which the doctrine of sola scriptura began. Rather, it was **rediscovered**.
- What caused the Reformation?
 - It was the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God preached by men of God in a language that the common people of Europe could understand ... and when their ears were exposed to the truth of God's Word it pierced their hearts and they were radically changed.
 - And as untold multitudes of individual sinners were changed, entire cities, provinces, and nations were changed as well.
- The Reformers themselves recognized that fact. One of the Swiss Reformers, a man named **Ulrich Zwingli**, compared the Bible to the mighty currents of the Rhine river. He said this: "For God's sake, do not put yourself at odds with the Word of God. For truly it will persist as surely as the Rhine follows its course. One can perhaps dam it up for awhile, but it is impossible to stop it."²
- **Martin Luther** echoed that confidence in the power of Scripture. Luther rejected the use of armed violence to promote the Reformation; all that was needed was the preaching of the Word. As he put it, "I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defense of the Gospel. By the Word the earth has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been saved; and by the Word also it shall be reestablished." (cited from D'Aubigne, *History Of The Reformation Of The Sixteenth Century*, 2.6.2.)
- It was this Book, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that brought revival to an entire continent and changed the course of history.
- As believers we identify. It is this Book that the Spirit of God has used to revive our own hearts – to bring us to a saving knowledge Christ and to grow us in sanctification, as we meditate on His Word and submit ourselves to it.

²<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/moversandshakers/zwingli.html>

- **Big Idea:** 3 bibliological truths originate from Scripture and were embraced by the early church fathers: 1) the doctrine of **inspiration**; 2) the doctrine of **canonicity**; and 3) the doctrine of **sufficiency**.

2 Timothy 3 [12] Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. [13] But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14] You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, [15] and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** [4:1] I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, [4] and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. [5] But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- The **context of persecution** as he wrote those words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- In fact, the letter of 2 Timothy was the last inspired letter he would ever write. He was in a Roman dungeon, awaiting execution. His crime, of course, was that he was guilty of being a Christian. And now he was about to die.
 - This was no ivory tower discussion of theoretical Bibliology. No, Paul's discussion of the Scripture in these verses reflects a genuine love for God's Word in the midst of very real trials, in the face of death itself.
 - When life itself was on the line, as he sat on the Roman equivalent of death row, Paul clung to the Scripture.
 - And as he passed on his final words of instruction to Timothy, his son in the faith, he told Timothy to cling to the Scripture as well.
- If greater persecution comes upon us, what will be our anchor in the midst of the storm? Will it not be God and His Word – the hope that He has given us through Scripture?

- And what will be the hope for our children? The very same thing. **Verses 14-15** (of chapter 3) stand as a great encouragement to Christian parents – to train up their children in the knowledge of the truth, just as Timothy had been trained.
- And what is the hope for the society around us? 2 Tim 4:2ff. That is how Timothy was to fulfill his calling as an evangelist, by proclaiming biblical truth in the midst of an antagonistic world. That same principle is true today.
 - The hope for our own souls, the hope for our children, the hope for the church, and the hope for the world are all one and the same: the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scripture.
- That’s the context: days from execution in Rome, Paul writes about the glorious nature of the Bible.
- 3 bibliological truths from **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – the doctrines of:
 - 1) Inspiration
 - 2) Canonicity
 - 3) Sufficiency

I. The Doctrine of Inspiration (v. 16)

- V. 16 – “All Scripture is inspired by God.”
- The Greek word translated “inspired” has the idea of “God breathed” -God Himself is the divine Author of Scripture – having inspired its contents through the Holy Spirit.
- The Scriptures consist of divine revelation, such that this Book truly is the Word of God.
- Other passages affirm this:
 - **2 Peter 1:20-21** is one such place – where Peter explains that godly men were moved by the Spirit as they spoke and wrote the prophetic Word of Scripture. In other words, the Spirit of God supernaturally worked through the human writers so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write, even though they did so using their own style, vocabulary, and personality.

In **1 Peter 1:10**, we learn that it was the Spirit of Christ who was speaking through the Old Testament prophets – as they foretold the sufferings of the Messiah.

- And in **Acts 4:25**, Peter told the religious leaders it was the Holy Spirit who prophesied through David regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Scripture is rightly called “God’s Word” – b/c it is God-breathed. God sovereignly superintended the human authors to speak and write that which is recorded on the pages of our Bibles.
- To read this Book, then, is to read the very revelation of God Himself. No book in history can make that claim.
- Over 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone, from Genesis 1:3 to Malachi 4:3, the assertion is made that God Himself spoke what is written within its pages.
- This fact continues into the New Testament, where the phrase “the word of God” occurs over 40 times (cf. Luke 11:28; Hebrews 4:12).
 - The implications that Scripture is God-breathed is massive. The Bible retains the character of its Author; God.
 - The Bible possesses God’s **authority** – which is why Paul goes on to charge Timothy to *preach the Word* in light of the Supreme Majesty of the One who will Judge of the living and the dead.
 - Because this Book is God-breathed, it comes with His **power** – such that it can transform hearts and minds and even entire continents.
 - Moreover, because God cannot lie, Scripture is **inerrant**; free from error (John 17:17).
- Scoffers and skeptics question the divine origins of the Scripture, or intentionally twist its teachings b/c they hate the authority of Scripture; it’s a threat.
 - The first eleven verses of **2 Timothy 3** indicate that Timothy faced that kind of opposition.
 - Like him, we too live in a world that is fully of critical attacks against God’s Word.

- We need to know how to defend the inerrancy and authority of Scripture. In the bibliology class, we will get into that in more detail. There are several different evidences we can talk about.
- But, it is important for us to realize that evidences like these, no matter how impressive, will never be able to convince an unbeliever to come to saving faith. Saving faith requires the miracle of regeneration, as the Holy Spirit uses His Word to open spiritually blind eyes and impart life to spiritually dead hearts.
- The Holy Spirit ultimately must do the work.
- John MacArthur: “There is only one argument that can prove to us that the Bible is true and authoritative for our lives: the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds.”³
- Those of you who are regenerate, testify to the power of Scripture. We could hear story after story of how God has transformed you by the power of his word.
- It had transformed Timothy’s life also: 2 Tim 3:14–15.
- Because it is inspired by God, all Scripture reflects His perfect character. All Scripture comes with His absolute authority. All Scripture is true, and right, and perfect. And all Scripture is empowered by the Holy Spirit to change the lives and hearts of those who read it – just as it transformed our own hearts when God opened our eyes to its truth.
- So, the Scriptures testify to the fact that it alone is God’s word. 2 Tim 3:16-17 says that the God-breathed nature of the Bible only applies to the books of Scripture.
- But what did the early church fathers teach about the inspiration of Scripture?

Church Fathers:

The church fathers recognized the inspiration of Scripture, and thus submitted to the Bible’s authority. Here is a small sampling:

Irenaeus: “The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.28.2, in ANF, 1:399).

Eusebius [Quoting Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria]: “We endeavored as far as possible to hold to and confirm the things which lay before us, and if the reason

³ John MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible* [Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1984], 23.

given satisfied us, we were not ashamed to change our opinions and agree with others; but on the contrary, conscientiously and sincerely, and with hearts laid open before God, we accepted whatever was established by the proofs and teachings of the Holy Scriptures." (Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.24.7-9)

Athanasius: "It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree or that God who gave them is false. But there is no disagreement at all. Far from it! Neither can the Father, who is truth, lie; 'for it is impossible that God should lie' (Heb. 6:18)." (Athanasius, *Easter Letter*, 19.3, in *NPNF* 4:546.)

Athanasius (speaking of Arian theologians): "Vainly then do they run about with the pretext that they have demanded Councils for the faith's sake; for divine Scripture is sufficient above all things; but if a Council be needed on the point, there are the proceedings of the Fathers, for the Nicene Bishops did not neglect this matter, but stated the doctrine so exactly, that persons reading their words honestly, cannot but be reminded by them of the religion towards Christ announced in divine Scripture." (*De Synodis: Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 1.6. *NPNF* 2nd Series, 4.453.)

Cyril of Jerusalem: "For concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures." (*Catechetical Lectures*, 4.17)

John Chrysostom: "Let us not therefore carry about the notions of the many, but examine into the facts... I exhort and entreat you all, disregard what this man and that man thinks about these things, and inquire from the Scriptures all these things; and having learnt what are the true riches, let us pursue after them that we may obtain also the eternal good things; which may we all obtain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, and honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen." (*Homily on 2 Corinthians*, 13.4)

Augustine: "I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to the truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it... Concerning which it would be wrong to doubt that they are free from error" (*The Letters of St. Augustine* 82, 3.)

Augustine: “The Scriptures are holy, they are truthful, they are blameless. . . . So we have no grounds at all for blaming Scripture if we happen to deviate in any way, because we haven’t understood it. When we do understand it, we are right. But when we are wrong because we haven’t understood it, we leave it in the right. We have gone wrong, we don’t make our Scripture to be wrong, but it continues to stand up straight and right, so that we may return to it for correction.” (*Sermons* 23.3; cited from the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture on 2 Timothy 3:16)

Augustine: “Therefore everything written in Scripture must be believed absolutely.” (*The City of God* 21.6.1.)

John Wycliffe: “God and His Word are all one, and they may not be separated.” (John Wycliffe, *Wycket* (Oxford, 1828), 5, in *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors*, 236n4.)

II. The Doctrine of Canonicity

- Canonicity refers to the fact that our Bibles are complete – being comprised of the sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation. The Old Testament canon contains the 39 books of Genesis to Malachi; and the New Testament canon contains the 27 books of Matthew to Revelation.
- 2 Tim 3:16 - “All Scripture.” If we are to rightly submit to the inspired Word of God, we need to be sure that we have the *complete* Word of God in our hands.
 - Now, in this context, Paul is primarily referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. And yet, we also know from places like **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, that Paul also regarded his own writings to be inspired and authoritative. And Peter, in **2 Peter 3:15-16**, similarly refers to Paul’s writings as being part of the Scriptures.
 - So, the principle expressed in verse 16 clearly extends beyond the Old Testament to include all of inspired Scripture – both from the Old Testament and the New.
- **But the question still remains, how do we know what comprises “All Scripture”?** How do we know that the canon is complete?
 - This is a critically important question, of course, since there are many today who would deny that these 66 books are truly the complete Word of God.

- The Roman Catholic Church, for example, claims that the Apocryphal books which were written during the Intertestamental Period (between the Old and New Testaments) ought to be included in the Bible.
- And cult groups like the Mormons want to add their own books to the Bible – things like the *Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Watchtower/JW – the NWT, a heretical translation of the Bible.
- Buddhism has their sacred book, the Tripitaka.
- Islam has the Quran and the Hadiths
- Hinduism has The Vedas, The Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita
- Taoism has the Dao De Jing
- Zoroastrianism holds to the Avesta.
- And then there are popular books and movies, like the *Da Vinci Code* from several years ago, that claim later Christians (like Constantine) determined what was in the Bible centuries after these books were written.
- **So, how do we know that “all Scripture” consists of these 66 books, and that alone is the word of God? How do we know that the Bible we hold in our hands is the complete word of God?**
- There are a number of ways we could answer such questions. We could spend weeks studying the doctrine of canonicity, talking through all of the relevant biblical and historical details.
- We covered this in detail in Entrust about 5 years ago, and we will do so again in the Sunday bibliology class. There are some fascinating and critical things to understand about that; how manuscripts came about; what manuscripts we have now; the accuracy of each; how we know.
- We won't go over it, but will just observe this:
- **“We believe in the 39 books of the Old Testament, because our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the Old Testament. And we believe in the 27 books of the New**

Testament, because our Lord Jesus Christ authorized His apostles to write the New Testament.”

- The doctrine of canonicity ultimately comes back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If we believe in Him and submit to His authority, then we will simultaneously believe in and submit to His Word. Because He affirmed the Old Testament canon, we also affirm it. Because He authorized His apostles to write the New Testament, we likewise embrace it as well.
- Thus, it was not the Roman Catholic Church that determined the canon. Constantine did not determine the canon. Joseph Smith certainly did not determine the canon. It is the authority of Christ Himself, the Lord of the church and the incarnate Son of God, on which the canon of Scripture rests.
- When it comes to **the Old Testament**, Jesus Christ affirmed the Jewish canon of His day – consisting of the very same content that is in our Old Testaments today.

A study of the gospels shows that, throughout His ministry, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament in its entirety (Matthew 5:17-18) – including its **historical reliability** (cf. Matthew 10:15; 19:3-5; 12:40; 24:38-39), **prophetic accuracy** (Matthew 26:54), **sufficiency** (Luke 16:31), **unity** (Luke 24:27, 44), **inerrancy** (Matthew 22:29; John 17:17), **infallibility** (John 10:35), and **authority** (Matthew 21:13, 16, 42).

He affirmed **the Law**, the **Writings**, and the **Prophets** and all that was written in them; clearly seeing the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God (Matt. 15:16; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; 5:1; etc.).

- As it concerns a Roman Catholic view of canonicity, first century Jews did not consider the Apocryphal books to be canonical. And neither did Jesus. He accepted the canon of the Jews as being the complete Old Testament. He never affirms or cites the Apocryphal books – and neither do any of the other writers of the New Testament.
- So, ultimately, we accept the canonicity of the Old Testament on the basis of our Lord’s authoritative affirmation of it.
- What about **the New Testament**? Our Lord not only affirmed the Old Testament, He also promised that He would give additional revelation to His church through His authorized representatives – namely, the Apostles.

John 14:25-26 - "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

- That last line is significant for the doctrine of canonicity. What did Jesus promise His apostles? That the Holy Spirit would help them remember all the things that Jesus had said to them.
- Where do we find the fulfillment of that promise? The four gospel accounts — where the things that our Lord did and said are perfectly recorded for us.
- In the same discourse, the Lord promises the apostles that He will give them additional revelation through the Holy Spirit.

John 16:12-15 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."

- And where is that additional revelation found? The New Testament epistles, wherein the Spirit of Christ guided the apostles to provide the church with inspired truth.
- The New Testament, then, **was pre-authenticated** by Christ, as He authorized the Apostles to be His witnesses in the world (Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 1:8).
- We embrace and submit to the New Testament writings, then, because they were penned by Christ's authorized representatives, being inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the Old Testament prophets.
- With that in mind we could go book-by-book through the New Testament, and we will find that it meets this criteria.
- The Gospels of Matthew & John were both written by Apostles.
- The Gospel of Mark is a record of the memoirs of the Apostle Peter, written by Mark under Peter's apostolic authority.
- The Gospel of Luke (and the book of Acts) were both the product of a careful investigation and eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:2), research that would have

included Apostolic sources. Moreover, as the companion of the Apostle Paul, Luke wrote under Paul's Apostolic oversight. (Paul even affirms Luke 10:7 as part of the Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18.)

- The Pauline Epistles (Romans–Philemon) were all written by the Apostle Paul.
- The authorship of Hebrews is unknown, but many in church history believed it to have been also written by Paul. If not penned by Paul himself, it was clearly written by someone closely associated with Paul's ministry – and therefore, by extension, under his apostolic authority.
- The General Epistles (the letters of James, Peter, and John) were all written by Apostles.
- The Epistle of Jude was written by the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) who operated under the apostolic oversight of his brother James (cf. Jude 1).
- And finally, the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John.

Summary: Every book of the NT was written under apostolic authority – either by an apostle or someone closely linked to their apostolic ministry. Thus, we submit to these books because they come from Christ's authorized representatives. In submitting to them, we are submitting to the Lord Himself.

- The reason the canon is closed is because there are no longer any apostles in the church today, and have not been since the end of the first century.
- Why these 66 books? Because God inspired them. They are His divine revelation. And Christ confirmed that fact. He affirmed the Old Testament canon, and He authorized the New Testament canon.
 - The **author of Hebrews** said it this way in Hebrews 1:1-2: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
 - In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself through the prophets ... and Jesus affirmed that reality. In the New Testament, God revealed Himself through His Son, and through His Son's authorized representatives.

- The authority of the Lord Jesus Himself, then, is the basis for our confidence in the fact that the Bible we hold in our hands is indeed “All Scripture.”
- But what did the early church believe about canonicity?

Church History and Canonicity

A. *WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA?*

- We could start by asking, “What OT canon did Jesus affirm?” And did that canon include the Apocrypha (which the Roman Catholic Church canonized at the Council of Trent in 1546)?
- The Roman Catholic Apocrypha consists of The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.); Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.); Tobit (c. 200 B.C.); Judith (c. 150 B.C.); 1 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.); 1 & 2 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.); Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.); The Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.); 2 Esdras (c. A.D. 100); Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.); The Prayer of Azariah (second or first century B.C.); Susanna (second or first century B.C.); Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.); and The Prayer of Manasseh (second or first century B.C.). Though the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament some 250 times, the NT never quotes from these apocryphal books.
- There is strong evidence (from Philo, Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, the Council of Jamnia, etc.) that the Jews of Jesus’ day affirmed an OT canon that is the same as ours. However:
 - the Jews ordered their books differently, starting with Genesis and ending with Chronicles. Also, the Minor Prophets were considered just one book, known as “The Twelve.” As a result, the Jewish canon consisted of only 22 or 24 books (in the case of 22 books, Judges and Ruth are combined; and Jeremiah and Lamentations are combined). But this canon consisted of the same books that make up the Protestant canon of 39 OT books.
- Earliest extant reference to the three main divisions of the 22 book Hebrew Scripture is to be found in the prologue to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus compassed ca. 190 BC in Hebrew by Jesus ben Sirach.
- Both the 24 and 22 book arrangement of the Jewish canon. Both approaches correspond to the 39 book approach of the Christian canon, but the order of the books is different.

Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 1:37-42: Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of

these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. . . . The prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

- Jesus affirmed this understanding of the OT canon in His teaching (cf. Matt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 11:51; 16:16). Moreover, Jesus never argued about the canon with the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Rather, His appeals to the OT assumed that both He and His hearers knew what was included in the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; 26:5; etc.).

Paul D. Wegner, “The Old Testament Canon in Jesus’ Day”: Jesus describes the extent of the canon in Matthew 23:34–35 and Luke 11:49–51. . . . Both passages state that the Jewish nation will be held responsible for the blood of the prophets from “the blood of Abel” (Gen. 4:8), the first recorded murder, “to the blood of Zechariah” (2 Chron. 24:20–22), the last recorded murder. The implication is that biblical history spans from Genesis to Chronicles, which is the same order as the oldest complete manuscripts of the Old Testament (i.e., Codex Leningradensis [1008 A.D.] and the Aleppo Codex [most likely about fifty years earlier]). There were certainly other martyrs following Zechariah, but the Jewish nation will not be held responsible for them, since they fall outside of the parameters of the Jewish authoritative sacred history. Jesus also uses the common tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible to refer to the canon in Luke 24:44: “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (NASB). This last designation is evidently representative of the final group of Old Testament writings, of which Psalms was the first and largest book. A similar designation for the Old Testament canon was in use from the time of Philo in the early first century (“[the] laws, and oracles delivered through the mouths of prophets, and psalms, and anything else which fosters and perfects knowledge and piety” [*Contemp.* 3 §25]) until at least the tenth century (al-Masudi, an Arabian historian and geographer, describes the Hebrew canon as “the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, which are the 24 books”). It is also interesting to note that Jesus quotes from each of the three parts of Scripture as authoritative material (e.g., Law: Mt. 4:4 – Deut. 8:3; Prophets: Mt. 10:35–36 – Mic. 7:6; Writings: Mt. 13:43 – Dan. 12:3).

- **Thus, because Jesus did not affirm a canon that included the intertestamental writings of the apocrypha, neither do we.**

- There are also places in the apocrypha where the apocrypha itself implies that the OT canon was already closed, and that the OT books consisted of those that correspond to the 39 books in our Old Testaments (cf. 1 Macc. 9:27, 14:41; 2 Esdras 14:44–48).
- Additionally, the Apocrypha contains theological and factual errors.

Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 270: “The subbiblical nature of the Apocrypha can be seen in its historical and chronological errors. It is claimed that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel (722 B.C.) as well as when Jeroboam revolted against Judah (931 B.C.), yet his total life-span was only 158 years (Tobit 14:11; cf. 1:3–5). Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as reigning in Nineveh instead of Babylon (Judith 1:1).”

- *Note:* Theological errors include (1) praying for the dead; (2) the worship of angels; (3) and the concept of purgatory.
- There is also evidence from **early Christian leaders** that the many in the ancient church did not consider the apocrypha to be on par with Scripture. Even Jerome (who translated the Vulgate) clearly states that the church of his day did not consider the apocrypha to be inspired. Nonetheless, Jerome included them in his translation since they were regarded as profitable for the church, even if they were not to be regarded as Scripture.

Origen, as recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25.1–2: “But it should be known that there are twenty-two canonical books, according to the Hebrew tradition; the same as the number of the letters of their alphabet.”

Athanasius, *Festal Letter 39*, 2–7 (4th century)

2. But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and **should henceforth read other books – those called apocryphal – led astray by the similarity of their names with the true books**; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the Church.

3. In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: ‘Forasmuch as some have taken in hand,’ to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the

Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine...

***4. There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.

***5. Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

6. These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, and said, 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.' And He reproved the Jews, saying, 'Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of Me.'

7. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon

them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 4.34–37 (4th century). For the process was no word-craft, nor contrivance of human devices: but the translation of the Divine Scriptures, spoken by the Holy Ghost, was of the Holy Ghost accomplished. **Of these read the two and twenty books, but have nothing to do with the apocryphal writings.** Study earnestly these only which we read openly in the Church. Far wiser and more pious than yourself were the Apostles, and the bishops of old time, the presidents of the Church who handed down these books. Being therefore a child of the Church, trench thou not upon its statutes. And of the Old Testament, as we have said, study the two and twenty books, which, if thou art desirous of learning, strive to remember by name, as I recite them. For of the Law the books of Moses are the first five, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. And next, Joshua the son of Nave, and the book of Judges, including Ruth, counted as seventh. And of the other historical books, the first and second books of the Kings are among the Hebrews one book; also the third and fourth one book. And in like manner, the first and second of Chronicles are with them one book; and the first and second of Esdras are counted one. Esther is the twelfth book; and these are the Historical writings. But those which are written in verses are five, Job, and the book of Psalms, and Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, which is the seventeenth book. And after these come the five Prophetic books: of the Twelve Prophets one book, of Isaiah one, of Jeremiah one, including Baruch and Lamentations and the Epistle; then Ezekiel, and the Book of Daniel, the twenty-second of the Old Testament. Then of the New Testament there are the four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are mischievous. The Manichaeans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tinctured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort. Receive also the Acts of the Twelve Apostles; and in addition to these the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; and as a seal upon them all, and the last work of the disciples, the fourteen Epistles of Paul. But let all the rest be put aside in a secondary rank.

Jerome, *Preface to Jerome's Works*, p. 492 As, then, the Church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes [Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus] for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the Church.

- In spite of this, because of its inclusion in the Latin *Vulgate*, the Roman Catholic Church officially “canonized” the Apocrypha in 16th century at the Council of Trent.
- **The main point:** We embrace and submit to the New Testament writings, then, because they were penned by Christ’s authorized representatives, being inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the Old Testament prophets.
- It is important to remember that because these books are inspired, they were authoritative (and therefore canonical) from the moment they were written.
- The New Testament writers themselves give testimony to the fact that their writings are the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Peter 3:2; 1 John 4:6; etc.).
- Nonetheless, the church’s recognition of the canon took time. After all, most of these books were letters addressed to specific churches. It took time for Christians in other places to hear about those letters and learn of their content. (Remember, this is in a day before email and the printing press.)
- In some cases, the recognition of certain books took longer because the church wanted to make sure that the book really was apostolic in nature. The church was careful not to prematurely accept or reject these books, but to examine them carefully (1 Thess. 5:20–21; cf. Acts 17:11). The fact that the church was careful to do its due diligence should give us greater (not lesser) confidence in their recognition of the canon.
- **In all of this, we can also trust the providential working of God, as He worked to preserve (in a providential, not miraculous, sense) the truth of His Word throughout church history. He did this through the corporate internal testimony of the Spirit.**
- From the very outset of church history, the church recognized the teaching of the apostles as authoritative.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67: On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a given city or rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president [pastor] in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1: We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.

- Early Christian leaders peppered their writings with citations from the New Testament in order to support their instruction with apostolic authority.

Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) mentions at least eight New Testament books in his epistles, Ignatius of Antioch cites about seven books (c. AD 106); Polycarp mentions 14 (c. AD 140). Irenaeus (AD 185) mentions 21; Hippolytus (AD 170-235), mentions 22.

- As heresies began to arise in church history, true believers realized that it was necessary to make a list of the books that they understood to be apostolic, and therefore authoritative.
 - A heretic named Marcion said that only Luke and 10 of Paul's epistles were inspired.
 - A group known as the Manichaens produced a false gospel called the Gospel of Thomas.
 - Other Gnostic groups began to write their own false gospels.
- The Muratorian Canon (AD. 170) is the earliest known list, and mentions 23 books. It did not mention Hebrews, James, and 1-2 Peter.
- By this point, most Christians accepted the canonicity of all 27 New Testament books, though some were still cautious about Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Revelation.
 - Again, we should be thankful for their caution. They were not willing to recognize any supposedly apostolic writing as canonical. Instead, they carefully investigated each writing to make sure that it truly was apostolic in origin.
 - Questions about the authorship of Hebrews caused it to be treated with caution.

- James was alluded to by many early church leaders, yet there were some who questioned its authenticity.
- 2 and 3 John were private letters, apparently written to individuals, which likely means they took longer to circulate and become known to the church.
- According to Jerome, 2 Peter was questioned because its Greek style is different than that of 1 Peter. Jerome suggested that Peter used a different amanuensis (secretary) for the second letter, which is why the style is different.
- Because Jude was not an apostle, but rather the brother of James, some wondered if it should be regarded as having apostolic authority. There were also questions about why it quoted from the non-biblical Book of Enoch.
- The early church generally attested to the apostolic authorship of the book of Revelation, but some were cautious about the apocryphal nature of its contents.

Bible Book	Clement of Rome	Ignatius	Polycarp	Justin Martyr	Irenaeus	Clement of Alexandria	Tertullian	Origen
Matthew		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mark			X	X	X	X	X	X
Luke		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
John				X	X	X	X	X
Acts	Possible	X	X		X	X	X	X
Romans	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
1 Corinthians	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
2 Corinthians			X		X	X	X	X
Galatians	X		X		X	X	X	X
Ephesians	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Philippians	X		X		X	X	X	X
Colossians		X			X	X	X	X
1 Thessalonians		X	X		X	X	X	X
2 Thessalonians			X		X	X	X	X
1 Timothy			X		X	X	X	X
2 Timothy			X		X	X	X	X
Titus					X	X	X	X
Philemon							X	X
Hebrews	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
James	Possible				Possible			X
1 Peter	Possible		X		X	X	X	X
2 Peter								Possible
1 John			X	X	X	X	X	X
2 John					X			Possible
3 John			X					Possible
Jude						X	X	X
Revelation				X	X	X	X	X

- By 363 at the Council of Laodicea, all 27 books are listed. In 367, Athanasius listed all 27. Those same books were recognized by later regional councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397).
- We have seen the doctrine of inspiration – that All Scripture is God Breathed – and the doctrine of canonicity – that All Scripture is contained in these 66 books of the Bible.
- That brings us to a 3rd doctrine that arises out of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and it is the doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency.

III. The Doctrine of Sufficiency

- Based on the fact that the Scripture is the very Word of God; and confident in the fact that our Bibles contain the complete canon of Scripture; we can now consider just how great an impact this Book ought to have on our lives.
- Look at what Paul writes in the remaining portion of verses 16-17.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 --All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- As the living and active Word of God, the Scripture is a book of infinite blessings and benefits! It is the revelation of the Creator Himself – the very words of life for those who are His creatures.
- The context of these verses is, of course, pastoral ministry. Timothy is being instructed to look to God’s Word as his all-sufficient authority in every aspect of doctrine and church life. And it is on the basis of this supernatural sufficiency that Paul will command Timothy to “Preach the Word.”
- But as those who are part of the church, these truths are still just as applicable. All Scripture is profitable – meaning beneficial and sufficient – for the teaching and doctrine we receive. It contains “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” Nothing more is necessary.
- And Scripture alone is all that is needed to reprove error in our lives and to correct us when we fall into sin. (That, by the way, is the foundation for biblical counseling.)

- And *the Scriptures* are sufficient for training us in righteousness, meaning that we need no other food by which to grow in respect to salvation. As Peter told his readers, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2-3).
- The title “man of God” in verse 17 is a technical term that refers specifically to those who preach and teach – but the implications again apply to all who read, hear, and submit to the Scriptures.
 - The result of submitting your life to God’s Word, then, is that you will be made “adequate” – a word that means “complete,” “proficient,” or “capable” to fulfill whatever it is that God has called you to do.
 - *In fact, I like the translation “complete” much better than the word “adequate.” Adequate makes it sound like you’re just average. But the Word of God does not leave us in some form of mediocrity; it makes us complete – fully ready to serve the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.*
 - The phrase “equipped for every good work” means that believers are “empowered and enabled to live righteously.”
 - The Word of God renews our minds as we meditate on it.
 - It grows us in holiness as we apply its truths.
 - It produces in us the fruit of the Spirit, as the Spirit of God uses the truth of Scripture to conform us into the image of Christ.
 - Thus, as Peter expressed in 2 Peter 1, in Scripture, we have “everything we need for life and godliness” through the “knowledge of God” that is revealed there.
- One of the great themes, of course, that characterizes the ministry of any faithful church is the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.
- And we embrace the Scripture as authoritative and sufficient because it comes from God Himself. The Bible is His *inspired* Word. These 66 books constitute the *completed canon*. And everything we need is found here in its *all-sufficient truth*.
- In light of that reality, we don’t look to psychology for answers, when God has given us the answers already. Nor do we question what God has said, on the basis of the latest evolutionary theory.

- We emphasize preaching the Bible because we know that the power is in the Spirit-inspired text. And we pay no attention to manmade strategies of church growth, because – again – the key to a ministry that pleases God is one that rests entirely on His all-sufficient Word.
- Moreover, as individual believers, we delight to read, study, and meditate on God’s Word because we recognize that His words are the words of true life – and they are sufficient to equip us and grow us in our sanctification – so that we can resist any temptation and endure any trial as we treasure His Word in our hearts.

Church Fathers

Origen (182–254): “In the two testaments every word that pertains unto God may be sought and discussed, and out of them all knowledge of things may be understood. And if anything remains which Holy Scripture does not determine, no other third scripture ought to be received to authorize any knowledge.”
(*Homily on Leviticus*, 5)

Hippolytus (170–236): “There is one God, whom we do not otherwise acknowledge, brethren, but out of the Sacred Scriptures. For as he, who would profess the wisdom of this world cannot otherwise attain it, unless he read the doctrines of the philosophers; so whosoever will exercise piety towards God, can learn it nowhere but from the Holy Scriptures. (*Against Heresies*, 9)

Aphrahat (c. 270–c. 345): “For if the days of a man should be as many as all the days of the world from Adam to the end of the ages and he should sit and meditate upon the holy Scriptures, he would not comprehend all the force of the depth of the words. And man cannot rise up to the wisdom of God.”
(*Demonstrations* 22.26; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 268)

Athanasius (296–373): “The sacred and inspired Scriptures are sufficient to declare the truth.” (*Against the Heathen*, 1.3)

Augustine (354–430): “For among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner of life.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, 2.9)

John Chrysostom (347–407): “By Scripture we may disprove what is false, be corrected, be brought to a right understanding, and be comforted and consoled.”
(*Homilies on 2 Timothy*, 9; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 269)

John of Damascus (676–749): “To search the sacred Scripture is very good and most profitable for the soul. For ‘like a tree which is planted near the running

waters,' so does the soul watered by sacred Scripture also grow hearty and bear fruit in due season." (*The Orthodox Faith* 4.17; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 269)

Conclusion

- We began by looking briefly at the Reformation – because in looking at the Reformation we see the dramatic effects that the Word of God produces when it is unleashed on the hearts and minds of men and women.
- But even long before the Reformation, throughout the centuries of church history, true Christians looked to the Scriptures as their highest authority – embracing its inspiration, canonicity, and sufficiency.
- Believers today should do the same.
- And, the doctrine of sola scriptura reaches back to both the Scripture itself and the early church fathers. And therefore, Rome cannot claim that their understanding of Scripture is justifiable either by Scripture itself nor the church fathers.