

The Great Controversy Faith Against All Odds

Lesson #5 for May 4, 2024

Scriptures: Psalms 119:11,162; John 16:13-15; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-24; 6:15-18.

1. This lesson gives us additional insight into the Protestant Reformation and the reformers.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The study this week highlights three central principles that characterize the great controversy:

1. **God's character is love and justice.**
2. **The only way to salvation is grounded in His love and righteousness.**
3. **The first two principles spring out of only one source: God's revelation as manifested in Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures.**

During medieval times, these three principles appeared to be forever engulfed in the devil's own darkness, never to be upheld, or proclaimed, again. But God called several great warriors, **the Reformers**, to stand up in the midst of the battlefield and raise the standard of God's truth once more. **These warriors were few. But the paucity in the ranks of the Reformers was meant to show that the movement was not human but divine, both in its origins and in its operations;** that is, we who are on God's side in the great controversy are not winning the battle by our wisdom or strength. On the contrary, **we gain the victory in the great controversy only as we give witness to what the Word of God proclaims and to what the power of God's grace can do, and does, for us and in us.** For these reasons, the Reformers understood that their mission was **to proclaim the five great solas:**

- ***sola scriptura*** (Scripture alone),
- ***sola gratia*** (grace alone),
- ***sola fide*** (faith alone),
- ***solus or solo Christus*** (Christ alone), and
- ***solī Deo gloria*** (to the glory of God alone).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 65.†‡§

2. We will see that the Protestant reformers had unshakeable faith in God's Word and God's saving grace.
3. Does your life have purpose? Do you have anything worth dying for? Or, living for?

[BSG:] The Protestant Reformers had something twenty-first century people desperately need—a purpose for their lives. In his book, *The Empty Self*, renowned American psychologist Philip Cushman discusses people who live purposeless lives. Their beliefs are shallow. Little of real significance matters to them, and they have nothing worth dying for, so they have little worth living for.

But the men, women, and children of the Protestant Reformation were dramatically different. They had an abiding purpose worth living for. What they believed mattered, and they were not willing to compromise their integrity. Their

core beliefs were an inseparable part of them. To deny these beliefs was to deny their very identity. In the face of death itself, they had an inner peace.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, April 27.^{‡§} [The Museum of Torture outside of Rome has dramatic displays.][‡]

4. In this lesson, we will see what we can learn from the experience of the early reformers that might **prepare us for what is still ahead of us in the final events of the great controversy.**
5. The **central issue**, of course, is **what role should God's Word, Old Testament and New Testament, play in the lives of Christians?** We will study more on that in the next lesson.
6. The psalmist recognized the importance of Scripture for the lives of every child of God. **Read Psalm 119:103-104,147,162.** The reformers recognized that by taking the Bible alone as their rule of faith, they were calling down upon them the wrath of the nominal Christian church. (See 1 Peter 1:23; Revelation 22:2.)

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] So with all the promises of God's word. **In them He is speaking to us individually**, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice. It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from that tree which is "for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:2. Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power. Nothing besides can impart the courage and faith which give vital energy to the whole being.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 122.3.^{‡†} [Why does God's Word affect people like that?][‡]

7. What would you do if you discovered that the Bible promises of a resurrection and future life are no longer valid? Would you go into a state of deep depression?
8. As faithful Christians, the reformers faced all kinds of problems in their daily lives. They had the promises in Scripture to buoy them up. The reformers filled their minds with Scripture. They memorized long sections of it; they sought to live their lives according to its precepts.
9. One of the earliest reformers was **John Wycliffe**, a pastor and theologian from England. Having studied and reached the highest levels of intellectual thought in the nation, he suddenly realized that the most important thing he could do for his people was to **translate the Bible into the English language of their day.**
10. We must recognize that printing had not yet been invented; so, copies were made by hand. However, when his translation became available, the Word spread rapidly. An immediate edict or warrant was issued for his arrest and death. Notice these words quoted by Ellen White about his response to that edict.

[EGW:] "With whom, think you," he finally said, "are ye contending? with an old man on the brink of the grave? No! with Truth—Truth which is stronger than you, and will overcome you."—Wylie, b. [book] 2, ch. [chapter] 13.—[as quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 90.3].[‡]

11. **How many Christians today do you think are ready to die for their faith?**
12. Many years before Wycliffe, Paul faced some of the same issues. Notice his words. **Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.** Also, notice these other ringing testimonies from Paul. **2 Corinthians 2:14:** But thanks be to God! For in union with Christ we are always led

by God as prisoners in Christ's victory procession. God uses us to make the knowledge about Christ spread everywhere like a sweet fragrance.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., 2 Corinthians 2:14). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡]

2 Corinthians 13:8: For we cannot do a thing against the truth, but only for it.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

[BSG:] The Reformers faced similar trials; yet, by faith they remained faithful to God's Word. An example of courage in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds is William Tyndale. **Tyndale's greatest desire was to give England an accurate, readable translation of the Bible.** He determined to translate the Bible **from the original languages and correct some of the errors in Wycliffe's translation about 140 years before.** Eventually Tyndale, too, was arrested and tried. Many of his Bible translations, which were printed in Worms, Germany, were seized and publicly burned. His trial took place in Belgium in A.D. 1536. He was condemned on the charge of heresy and sentenced to be burned. His executioners **strangled him while they tied him to the stake and then burned his body.** His dying words were spoken with zeal in a loud voice and were reported as, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." God miraculously answered Tyndale's prayer.

Within four years of his death, four English translations of the Bible were published. In 1611 the King James Version [*sic*] of the Bible was printed, and it was largely based on Tyndale's work. The 54 scholars who produced the work drew heavily from Tyndale's earlier English translation. One estimate suggests that the Old Testament of the 1611 King James Bible [*sic*] is 76 percent Tyndale's translation, and the New Testament is 83 percent. In 2011 the King James Version [*sic*] of the Bible celebrated its 400th anniversary by passing the milestone of one billion Bibles in print. The King James Bible [*sic*] has impacted tens of millions of people around the world. **Tyndale's sacrifice was well worth it.**

No matter how difficult it seemed or how challenging the circumstances were, Tyndale and his Bible-believing colleagues trusted that God was working out everything according to His will. Tyndale's life made a difference for eternity.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, April 29.^{†‡§}

13. Read **Daniel 12:3** and **Revelation 14:13**. Do the words used in these passages describe your life today?

14. Approximately 150 years after Wycliffe, we come to the story of **Martin Luther**.

[BSG:] One day while studying in the university library, Martin Luther came to a turning point in his own life. He discovered a **Latin copy of the Bible.** **He never knew before that a book like this even existed.** With sheer delight, he read chapter after chapter, verse after verse. He was amazed at the clarity and power of God's Word. As he pored over its pages, the Holy Spirit illuminated His mind. He sensed the guidance of the Holy Spirit as truths obscured by tradition seemed to leap off the pages of Holy Writ. Describing his first

experience with the Bible, he wrote, “O that God would give me such a book for myself!”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 30.^{†‡}

15. Have you ever sat down and thought what principles you should follow in interpreting God’s Word for yourself? Consider the following passages.

John 14:25-26: ²⁵ “I have told you this while I am still with you. ²⁶The Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.**”—*Good News Bible.*^{*†}

John 16:13-15: ¹³ “When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come. ¹⁴He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you. ¹⁵All that my Father has is mine; that is why I said that the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you.”—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

2 Peter 1:20-21: ²⁰ Above all else, however, remember that no one can explain by himself or herself a prophecy in the Scriptures. ²¹For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

16. Do you think the Holy Spirit is still active in the lives of Christians today?

[BSG:] Unfortunately, many professed Christians today downplay the supernatural element in the Bible and exaggerate the human element. **Since Satan can no longer keep the Bible from us, he does the next best thing: strip it of its supernatural character, make it merely good literature or, even worse, an oppressive tool of religion to control the masses.**

The Reformers saw clearly that the Holy Spirit—not the priests, prelates, and popes—was the infallible interpreter of Scripture. There is an interesting exchange recorded between John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, and Mary, Queen of Scots.

“Said Mary: ‘Ye interpret the Scriptures in one manner, and they [the Roman Catholic teachers] interpret in another; whom shall I believe, and who shall be judge?’

“ **‘Ye shall believe God, that plainly speaketh in His word,’ answered the Reformer;** ‘and farther than the word teaches you, ye neither shall believe the one nor the other. **The word of God is plain in itself; and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, which is never contrary to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places,** so that there can remain no doubt but unto such as obstinately remain ignorant.’ ”—David Laing, *The Collected Works of John Knox*, vol. 2, pp. 281, 284, quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 251[.2].—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 30.^{†‡Ω§}

17. **Christians had been taught for hundreds of years that salvation was based on doing good deeds and accumulating credit in the records of heaven. The reformers recognized that salvation has nothing to do with our works. It is based on our relationship with the One who provides our salvation—Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 2:8-9: ⁸⁻⁹ For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Romans 3:23-24: ²³ Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. ²⁴But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Romans 6:23: For sin pays its wage—death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Romans 5:8-10: ⁸ But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us! ⁹By his blood we are now put right with God; how much more, then, will we be saved by him from God's anger! ¹⁰**We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life!**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] God has provided salvation as a gift. His Holy Spirit leads us to accept by faith what Christ has so freely provided through His death on Calvary's cross. Jesus, the divine Son of God, offered His perfect life to atone for our sins.

Divine justice demands perfect obedience. Christ's perfect life stands in place of our imperfect lives. The divine law we have broken condemns us to eternal death. The Bible is clear. Through our sinful choices, we have "fallen short" of God's ideal for our lives. We have sinned. Left to ourselves, we cannot meet the just, righteous demands of a holy God. As a result, we deserve eternal death. But there is good news. The apostle Paul assures us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Rom. 6:23, NKJV*). It is a gift, undeserved; if it were by works, we would earn it, and if there is any one truth that shines out of the gospel, it is that we cannot earn salvation.

Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformers discovered Christ and Christ alone as their source of salvation. It was then that Luther began to preach the message of Christ's saving grace. Crowds flocked to hear his heartfelt, life-changing messages. His words were like a drink of cold water in the barren desert of their lives. The people were shackled by the traditions of the medieval church and kept in bondage with centuries-old rituals that provided no spiritual life. Luther's biblical messages touched hearts, and lives were changed.

As Luther read the New Testament, he was overwhelmed with the goodness of God. He was amazed at God's desire to save all humanity. **The popular view taught by church leaders at the time was salvation as partly a human work and partly God's work. Luther discovered that Christ's death on the cross was all-sufficient for all humanity.**

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His."—Ellen G. White,

The Desire of Ages, p. 25[.2].

What a powerful and wonderfully written summary of the gospel, that we could be justified by a righteousness “in which we had no share.” What a promise!—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 1.^{†§}

18. **If only we all could recognize that good works are the result of our salvation and not the cause of our salvation!** What do the following passages tell us about our salvation?

Romans 3:27-31: ²⁷ What, then, can we boast about? Nothing! And what is the reason for this? Is it that we obey the Law? No, but that we believe. ²⁸For we conclude that **a person is put right with God only through faith, and not by doing what the Law commands.** ²⁹Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Of course he is. ³⁰God is one, and he will put the Jews right with himself on the basis of their faith, and will put the Gentiles right through their faith. ³¹Does this mean that by this faith we do away with the Law? No, not at all; instead, we uphold the Law.—*Good News Bible.*^{*†}

Read Romans 6:15-18.

Romans 8:1-2: ¹ There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death.—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

19. Try to imagine yourself living in the early days of Luther’s discoveries and teachings. Suppose you have gone to a church service where Luther or one of his followers was preaching and you were told that instead of earning a way to salvation by works, and by paying money, your salvation was guaranteed by Jesus Christ Himself. Your future depended upon your personal relationship with Him and had nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church!
20. **John Wesley** was one of the later reformers. Notice these words about him:

[BSG:] One day, John Wesley attended a Moravian meeting in London. Wesley sat amazed as **he heard Luther’s introduction to Romans read.** For the first time in his life, he began to understand the gospel. Something stirred within, and he felt strangely drawn to this Christ who had given His life for him. He exclaimed, “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.”—John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* (London: Stephen Couchman, 1793), p. 331....

The Reformers systematically studied the Word to discover more truth. Not content with the status quo, nor a rigid religious experience with little or no growth, they were constantly yearning to know Christ better. Many Bible-believing Christians in the Middle Ages paid an extremely high price for their commitment. They were tortured, imprisoned, exiled, and executed. Their properties were confiscated, their homes burned, their lands ravished, and their families persecuted. When they were driven from their homes, they looked for a city “whose builder and maker is God” (*Heb. 11:10*). When they were tortured, they blessed their tormentors, and when they languished in dark, damp dungeons, they claimed God’s promises of a brighter tomorrow. Although their bodies were imprisoned, they were free—free in Christ, free in the truths of His Word, free in the hope of His soon return.

When you look to yourself, what hope of salvation do you have?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 2.^{†§}

[EGW:] God's faithful servants were not toiling alone. While principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places were leagued against them, the Lord did not forsake His people. Could their eyes have been opened, they would have seen as marked evidence of divine presence and aid as was granted to a prophet of old. When Elisha's servant pointed his master to the hostile army surrounding them and cutting off all opportunity for escape, the prophet prayed: "Lord [*sic*], I pray Thee [*sic*], open his eyes, that he may see." 2 Kings 6:17. And, lo, the mountain was filled with chariots and horses of fire, the army of heaven stationed to protect the man of God. Thus did angels guard the workers in the cause of the Reformation.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 208.4.[‡] [How did Elisha know that all of those angels were there? Could he see them?][‡]

[EGW:] When powerful foes were uniting to overthrow the reformed faith, and thousands of swords seemed about to be unsheathed against it, Luther wrote: "Satan is putting forth his fury; ungodly pontiffs are conspiring; and we are threatened with war. Exhort the people to contend valiantly before the throne of the Lord, by faith and prayer, so that our enemies, vanquished by the Spirit of God, may be constrained to peace. Our chief want, our chief labor, is prayer; let the people know that they are now exposed to the edge of the sword and to the rage of Satan, and let them pray."—D'Aubigné, b. [book] 10, ch. [chapter] 14.—[as quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 209.2].[‡]

[BSG:] **Justification by faith, the great truth that Luther discovered anew, is the foundation of the gospel, the truth upon which our hope of salvation rests.** His hymn "A Mighty Fortress" powerfully articulates the gospel: "Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing, Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He, Lord Sabaoth His name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985), no. 506.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 3.^{†§}

21. If someone asked you to describe the main issues in salvation and spiritual healing, what would you say?

1. [BSG:] How can we explain the balance between grace and law, between faith and good works?
2. Why do you think it is so easy to let our minds slip into legalism? How would you define legalism? Why is it so detrimental to our Christian faith?
3. **Are there dangers if the concept of "salvation by grace" is not rightly understood?** Where might that misunderstanding lead?
4. What do some people mean when they use the term "**cheap grace**"? Is grace ever cheap?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 3.^{†§}

22. The reformers felt that the idea of basing all teachings and doctrine on the Scriptures was the central basis of their teaching. Do you still agree with that? How many things do you believe that are not based on Scripture?

23. Do you agree with these words of Paul?

Ephesians 2:8-9: ⁸⁻⁹For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.—*Good News Bible*.*

24. Seventh-day Adventists have always believed that God has revealed Himself through general revelation and through special revelation. What are the differences between those?

[BSG:] In each stage of human history, the devil has worked with unsleeping malice to distort God's character, plans, sovereignty, and law. God responded by revealing Himself to humanity. God reveals Himself to us is [*sic*] **through nature, history, human nature, and our consciousness**. This divine disclosure is commonly called **general revelation**. However, **general revelation is not specific because it is non-propositional; that is, it is not transmitted directly into words**. In addition, sin produced significant changes to nature, to history, to human nature, to morality, to human thinking, and to our perception of reality that poses challenges to our appreciation, and apprehension, of general revelation....

Before humanity's fall into sin, God's **special revelation** was manifested **through His personal relationship and conversations with Adam and Eve**. After the Fall, God did not abandon humanity, though sin gravely altered His relationship with the human race. He continued His personal revelation to Adam and Eve and to the rest of humanity through various means, such as **theophanies (divine appearances in various forms)** or **prophetic experiences (dreams and visions)**.

For millennia, God worked through patriarchs and prophets to counter the devil's misinformation, but more important, to call humanity to understand Him correctly, to trust Him and to accept His plan of salvation.... **Through Jesus**—in His incarnation, life, ministry, sacrificial death, and resurrection—God revealed fully His character of love and righteousness, and His creative and salvific power.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 66.†‡§

Read John 1:1-3,14 and Hebrews 1:1-3.

2 Corinthians 5:21: Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.—*Good News Bible*.* [What does the term *in union with Him* mean?][‡]

25. Jesus ascended to heaven more than 2000 years ago. What Divine Agency do we have in our day to guide us in spreading the news to others?

[BSG:] But **God's special revelation** does not stop at these historical, divine manifestations. **Through the process of inspiration**, God worked directly with, and **through, prophets and apostles** (*Eph. 2:20*) to record His special divine revelation so that it could be published and proclaimed to the entire world (*2 Tim. 3:16, Matt. 28:20*). This **record of divine revelation is the Holy Scriptures, comprised of the Old and New Testaments and focused on**

God's revelation in Christ (*John 5:39, 40; Luke 24:27*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 67.^{†§} [How many recognized His divinity?][‡]

Ephesians 2:20: You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself.—*Good News Bible*.*

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19-20; and John 5:39-40.

Luke 24:27: And Jesus [on the road to Emmaus] explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.—*Good News Bible*.*^{†‡}

[BSG:] Satan employed several strategies to undermine God's special revelation. One such strategy was to cause humanity to doubt what God revealed in His Word. But after God's Word was proved true, time and again, the devil redirected his focus to his main strategy: **making Scripture dependent on human interpretation and tradition**. This shift occurred among God's people during Old Testament times. Thus, in New Testament times, some of them had a hard time accepting Jesus, not because Scripture was unclear but because they wanted to filter God's Word through their own tradition (*Mark 7:1–13*). **Thus, the devil achieved his three-pronged goal:** to **“let go of the commands of God,”** (*Mark 7:8, NIV*), to **set “aside the commands of God,”** (*Mark 7:9, NIV*), and to **“nullify the word of God”** (*Mark 7:13, NIV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 67.^{†§}

Read Mark 7:1-13.

[BSG:] Initially, as with the Jews, tradition may be well intended. But if not carefully regulated by biblical principles, tradition eventually gives rise to the very essence of sin: the removal of God's authority; an attempt to control Him; and the establishment of human authority over God, His kingdom, and His revelation. **The establishment of tradition over the Word of God demolishes the very purpose and meaning of God's special revelation**, which is to reveal His true character, purposes, and plans and to reveal the way of redemption. Instead of God's love and salvation by grace, people are taught to follow the instructions of the religious experts and to follow a burdensome way of salvation (*Matt. 23:4*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 67.^{†§}

Matthew 23:4: “They tie on to [*sic-Br*] people's backs loads that are heavy and hard to carry, yet they aren't willing even to lift a finger to help them carry those loads.”—*Good News Bible*.*[‡]

26. The Roman Catholic Church did with all of Scripture what the Jews had done with the Old Testament. After trying to follow very strictly the rules, gradually, so-called scholars wandered away from the guiding principles and tradition became more important than the Word of God.
27. Roman Catholic scholars taught that unless one clearly understood the traditions of the church as well as Scripture, one could not be a true Christian. This implied that only they were allowed to interpret Scripture.
28. Thus, they developed a hierarchical system and sacraments by which people believed they could earn salvation. This, of course, was directly in contradiction to the Scriptures.

29. Trouble arose when the reformers said we must get back to the Scriptures and the Scriptures only. **This, of course, basically was saying that all the church's traditions were not part of God's requirements. And when the reformers said they would accept only the Word of God (the Bible), they obviously were rejecting the pope and his underlings.**
30. Unfortunately, over time, even the protestant reformers began perverting the truths of Scripture. The idea rose up that these writings in the Bible were the words of human beings. Although influenced by God, they were still only human words. **The liberals insisted that we interpret the Bible not as if it were God's words themselves, but through their filter.**
31. More modern liberal Protestant theologians suggest that Scripture is no longer the sole authoritative source, but rather one among many historic documents to understand truth.
32. We believe that as God's end time remnant church, Seventh-day Adventists have been divinely entrusted with this message to return to the basic truths taught in Scripture.

[BSG:] By establishing the *sola scriptura* principle, the Protestant Reformers rose against this demonic strategy operating within the church. **The Reformers established that Scripture was the only form of special revelation that God gave to the church at that time and that people needed to be allowed to listen to God directly by reading the Bible themselves.** *Sola scriptura* does not mean that the Protestant Reformers excluded any other form of knowledge, such as reason, arts, or experience. **What the Reformers meant by *sola scriptura* is that Scripture is God's authoritative revelation that shapes our worldview, telling us who He is, what He has done, who we are, and what happened to us at the Fall.** Further, Scripture reveals how God saves us and what He expects of us. Thus, the authority of Scripture is above the authority of the church and above that of any other human authority or form of knowledge. The Word of God created the church, not the other way around. The *sola scriptura* principle is directly and inseparably related to the establishment of another principle, *sola gratia/sola fide*. When Martin Luther read the Bible without the filter of tradition, he discovered in it the true character of God and His true way of salvation. In Scripture, the Protestants discovered the central message that God wanted to communicate to humanity in the midst of the great controversy: our God is a God of love and righteousness, not a tyrant. Even when we rebelled against Him, He died in our place. He offered us the gift of His righteousness, so that we might be restored to His kingdom when we accept this gift by faith.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 68.^{†‡§}

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Email: Info@theox.org