

The Five Non Negotiables

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[0 : 00] for our bringing this particular message on the five non-negotiables. Someone in the congregation, who obviously wanted to remain anonymous, suggested the inclusion of these items as part of our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation on October 31.

Although we are a little late for that, the importance of these truths makes a fitting message with which to conclude the year. And they are sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christus, and sola Deus gloria.

These are as they appeared in the 1500s. We move them from Latin to English and call them Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, and glory to God alone.

One should readily understand why we label them as non-negotiables. And these we consider absolutely essential to the faith that is called Christian.

If you are willing to abandon any of these five items, then you have something dramatically less than the biblical Christianity that we espouse.

[1 : 19] So if you would join with me in a word of prayer, we'll take a brief look at each of these five negotiables and how important they are. We are grateful, Father, for this occasion to be together, and we are especially thankful for the truth that you have provided for us.

And as we partake of it, we look to you for the understanding and enlightenment that only you can give. We do greatly appreciate and are thankful for those whom we refer to as reformers, those who in many cases paid an enormous price to stand for the truth so that it might be proclaimed to the people of their day and of subsequent days even down to where we are right now.

We are thankful for men like Luther and Tyndale and Wycliffe and so many others who saw and understood the value of the word of God and were determined to make it available to the common people.

We are blessed beneficiaries of their efforts. We do not take it lightly. We pray now that as we engage the content, you will provide for us that which we know we lack, the wisdom to understand and appreciate these as we should.

As we close out this year, we are mindful of the fact that there is much going on in the government of our land. Shortly, a new Congress will be seated, and new agendas will be determined and established, and we pray for the corporate wisdom of that body that you will instill in them a sense of urgency, a sense of importance as regards the needs of this nation.

[3 : 08] We pray that there may be an openness on the part of each of them to weigh carefully and consider propositions and offerings and opportunities that are presented. We ask that as you enlighten those who are in office that they will draw upon the wisdom that you make available to them.

We are grateful for godly counselors that are at the service of our president, and we trust that they will be able to give him the insight and wisdom that is necessary and that he will have the courage to follow through with decisions that are beneficial for the entire nation.

Thank you again for this day. Thank you for the snowfall. Thank you for the beauty of it. As we see the whiteness of the snow, we are reminded that it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that cleanses us from our sin and makes them white as snow.

We bless you and thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen. For our scripture portion, if you would turn, please, to Psalm 19. We are going to be looking at our first of the five negotiables, and that has to do with the scripture itself.

And I suspect that the reason that the five of the five that scripture leads the list is because everything else that follows comes from the scriptures, and were it not for the Bible that God has

seen fit to give us by way of revelation, we wouldn't have any appreciation at all for grace, for faith, for the person of Christ, or the glory of God.

[4 : 47] So it all stems from the Christian scriptures. And as we have said so many times in the past, I would not want a message of this caliber, of this content, to escape the saying, and let me repeat it.

It's all about authority. It always has been. It always will be. By that we simply mean the positions that you hold, the decisions that you make, the agenda that you establish, is all determined by what and who you accept as your ultimate authority.

For the believer, it can only be the word of God. And we're going to look now at Psalm 19, beginning with verse 7, down through the end of the chapter.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

[6 : 02] The judgments of the Lord are true. They are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold. Yes, than much fine gold.

Sweeter also than honey, and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them, thy servant is warned. In keeping them, there is great reward.

Who can discern his errors? Equip me of hidden faults. Also, keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.

Let them not rule over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

And then for a New Testament passage that attests to the reality and the importance of the scriptures, we would address 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16, a passage that I'm sure many of you have committed to memory, as I have over the years, but it is always good to see it in print before us.

[7 : 19] So let us look at it, if we may. 2 Timothy chapter 3, and may I remind you before we read this, as far as we can determine, this is the Apostle Paul's last letter.

If not his last letter, it certainly is his last letter to Timothy. And the point has well been made that when a man writes things like the time of my departure is at hand, I am ready to be offered, he knows he has but a very short time left on this earth.

And I think extra weight ought to be given to what any man has to say when he knows his time is very, very short.

This is no time for pettiness. This is no time for chit-chat. This is a time to focus on things that really matter.

And in addressing his young protege, Timothy, he is going to tell him that his dissemination of the word of God and his respect for it is the thing that will stand the test.

[8 : 35] So, in verse 16, he reminds Timothy that all scripture is inspired by God. That means it is the very breath of God.

When you and I speak, when we talk, we breathe while we're talking. Without even being aware of it, we are inhaling and exhaling all the time we are talking.

And that is how we get our words out to one another. Well, we are told that the word of God is the breath of God. The word is *theonoustos* in the Greek and it literally means the breathing of God.

And the word *neustos* is actually in the English it's spelled with a P and it's related to the word *pneuma* and *pneumatic* and *pneumonia* which we in English spell with a P-N-E-U-M-O-N-I-A, et cetera.

And it has to do with a problem with air, a problem with breathing. If you have *pneumonia*, it's a disease of the lungs. And if you have air in your tires, they're called *pneumatic* tires.

[9 : 43] So the word of God is *theonoustos*. It is the breath or the air of God breathed into these scriptures. And they are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction for training and righteousness in order that or so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

And the scriptures the only thing that will do that job. That is why when in 1970, 71, I guess it was, when Grace Bible Church was organized, we were debating among ourselves as a group of about 75 or 80 people, what was going to be the name of the church.

Well, we knew two things for sure and there were a number of suggestions that were proposed. All of them, I think, were good names for a church, but the congregation such as it was then made it very clear that there were two things we really wanted to emphasize.

One was the importance and the authority of the word of God and the other was that we wanted to emphasize the doctrine of the grace of God.

[11 : 13] So it didn't take too long for us to put that together and it came out with Grace Bible Church. And I would also add to that that there are probably, well, I've never counted them because I don't know where they all are or who they all are or wouldn't be able to count them, but if I were to take a guess, I would suspect there are probably a couple of hundred Grace Bible Churches scattered all over the country.

And some of them may be very much like this Grace Bible Church in doctrine and practice and some others may be far removed from this Grace Bible Church in doctrine and practice.

So the name doesn't necessarily mean anything. If you are in Timbuktu or someplace in Iowa and you come across a Grace Bible Church, you may think, well, let's go visit here.

This is just like Grace Bible Church. Well, it may not be anything at all like Grace Bible Church back in Springfield or it may be very similar. So all I'm saying is the name doesn't really prove anything.

We did want to emphasize those two things, the grace of God and the word of God.

As we have also related to you in time past, there are only three possible sources of information and if you can think of a fourth one, I would appreciate your enlightening me because I've given a lot of thought and I can't come up with a fourth one.

[12 : 41] By information, we mean simply data, content, content. And the first that we would suggest is the mind of man and that is by far and away, I think, the most popular and the most often relied upon.

And when we talk about man and his mind as being a source of information, that throws into the mix all of academia, all of the philosophers of the past, great and small, all of the wisdom that man can garner, all of the content in the encyclopedias, all of the information that is put out there by human beings and compiled by human beings and made available to human beings as information.

That is the principal source that most people have for what they hear and what they process in their own mind. You get this through newspapers, magazines, television, all kinds of media and of course, we can't leave out the internet, some of which information is suspect, but nonetheless, it is a source.

These are all human sources. They're all man-made, man-contrived, man-generated and utilized by man. That's the principal source from which most people get their information.

The second source that is possible is from the adversary. He dispenses information also. All of his information is deceitful.

[14 : 19] He is the deceiver. That's his modus operandi. He is famous for two things. One, he is a liar and a deceiver and he is a murderer and he seeks to take life even as God gives life.

He provides a source of information. In fact, our very first parent by the name of Eve tacked in to Satan for his information and he gave her his information.

Yea, hath God said you shall not eat of it? God knows that in the day you eat of it you will be as he is knowing good from evil and he had a song and dance he sold it and she bought it.

So Satan was her source of information. Continues to be such all throughout human history Satan has been very active in the art of deception and nobody nobody is as expert as it as he is.

he is the master deceiver. Deception is causing people to think that things are other than they really are and he is very proficient at it and very convincing very convincing I have no doubt that some of the people who have made great contributions to human writings providing human information have also tapped into what Satan had to offer even of course not realizing it because only those who are foolish enough to want to engage the adversary would be willing to do that but most people who get information from a satanic source do it unknowingly and innocently but nonetheless they are duped by the adversary so he is a source of information and as we look back on some of the videos that we've been seeing at the nine o'clock hour and the numerous gods that were worshipped in Egypt they had a god for virtually everything and the apostle

[16 : 47] Paul makes it quite clear when he writes to the Corinthians that meat that is offered to idols is just so much stuff and nonsense because the idol has no reality has no objective reality and there is no god behind the idol that is represented by the idol what is behind the idol are demons and those who think they are offering sacrifice to idols are actually offering sacrifices to demons that too is all part and parcel of satanic activity Paul describes him as the god of this age in 2 Corinthians 4 very very important passage I would certainly recommend that you commit it to memory if our gospel be hid it is hid to those who are lost whose minds that's your thinking apparatus whose minds have been blinded by the god of this age lest the light of the glorious gospel of christ who is the image of god should shine under them so he's in the business of blinding men's eyes he disrupts their thinking processes he enables them to utilize their mind which is already skewed warped through the fall because we all have a skewed mind we have a skewed body and a skewed mind that's the result of the fall it wasn't just our body that was affected by the fall that will ultimately end in physical death but our thinking processes also our mind fell with the body and that allows us to reach really ridiculous conclusions about a whole lot of things in fact

Paul describes these ridiculous conclusions as in Romans chapter 1 as those whose minds engage in vain imaginations things that is they have no reality or substance to them at all but nonetheless they come up with these things and they go with it and you could put a whole lot of things into that category found right there in Romans chapter 1 it causes people to think in an incorrect way and reach incorrect conclusions and engage in incorrect activity there is a string there is a process that is set and it becomes very evident when you just look about our culture and see how people are behaving and what they are doing and some of the bizarre things that are taking place how else in the world could anyone come up with something like same sex marriage other than with a skewed thinking apparatus and that's just one example there are so many out there so many things that are off the wall and we look at it and we say how in the world could anybody believe that well if you've got a skewed thinking apparatus you can come up with almost anything you can come up with something like

Richard Dawkins suggested when he completely repudiated the idea of special creation because that's fanciful what is very possible however and likely to have happened is that aliens from other planets invaded earth and seeded it with human spores and that's where humanity came from that is very logical that is a result of skewed thinking but it's out there we must realize as believers that God is fully aware of our tendency for skewed thinking that's one reason we have the revelation of God in the Bible it is designed to correct our thinking and to enable us to think the thoughts of God after him and that is the third source of our information the word of

God the wisdom of God and when we come to it we do so with a full realization and acknowledgement that yes my mind my thinking process is just as subject to skewed thinking as is Richard Dawkins or anybody else and the only thing that is adequate to correct my skewed thinking is the word of God that is the corrective that is one reason among many why we have it it enables us to reach right conclusions to engage in right kind of decisions and actions but only when we are able to track on the word of God so you've got three sources and during the Q&A; maybe you can think of a fourth one if you can I would appreciate it but I don't know what it would be there is the mind of man the mind of Satan the adversary and the mind of

God those three sources we get our information we process the information we reach our conclusions based on that information that is derived from that so so much for sola scriptura and in the in the mind of the reformers what they meant principally by that phrase sola scriptura which literally means the scriptures alone is that they disregarded they dismissed all other authority including the college of cardinals including the pope including tradition including other things that were so prevalent when the reformation got underway and all of those things they rejected as authoritative coming to the authority of the

[23 : 23] Bible and the Bible alone and that's what they meant by sola scriptura so they rejected all writings of church councils and writings of the church fathers etc and just went with the authority of scripture alone that is principally what they meant and then the second thing that we would like to look at is sola gracia that is grace alone and I cannot think of a passage that spells that out more succinctly and more clearly than another that you've probably committed to memory and it's found in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 8 and 9 wherein it is by grace that is by God's unmerited favor that you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not as a result of works that no one should boast you'll look far and wide to find a clearer expression of the grace

of God and how it gets to you than what is found in these two verses and when the apostle says it is by grace you have been saved he is writing to a group of

Gentiles and he addresses them earlier in chapter one and he says remember that you Gentiles you were at one time without hope without faith without God in this present world you were as bad off as you could be but in Christ you have been brought near and that that is absolutely everything and it was on the basis of and that and that word that refers back to the term saved which means that salvation is not of yourselves it is the gift of God and it arrives at your heart by way of faith and this means that being justified means to be declared righteous it doesn't mean you are righteous you it doesn't mean you are righteous in your behavior or in your activities you may be depending on what it is you're doing or you may not be but this righteousness and this salvation is not connected at all with human behavior it is connected with faith and here is where the vast majority of the world parts with biblical

Christianity because there is no other belief system in the world if you take any of the large belief systems whether it's Hinduism whether it's Buddhism or Islam or any of them any of the larger ones or any of the smaller ones you will not find among them even one that recognizes that its adherents and its followers are not accepted into that faith on the basis of what they do biblical Christianity is the only faith system that is not a human work system it is a grace system that means you as an individual are the recipient of something you do not deserve that's why it's called a gift this is the only faith that operates that way all others are dependent upon the behavior or the contribution of the individual to find favor and acceptance with the

God of that particular belief biblical Christianity stands completely apart from all the rest of that in fact it is one of the things that makes many people rejected because man has an innate intense desire to make some kind of a positive contribution that the recipient will recognize and give you some points for but it doesn't work that way with Christianity it is all of grace or it is not of grace at all it is completely undeserved and it isn't that there was no work involved there was an incredible work involved but it wasn't your work it was Christ work and it was imputed to you so this imputation means that which God has put in you as opposed to what he put on you he has put it in you so it becomes part of your being that is salvation by grace a gift of

God and Paul tells us that it is on the basis of faith and here of course is where the great line of demarcation was drawn between the reformers and the traditionalists that maintained their position with the Roman Catholic Church because we see and they saw justification that is becoming in a right relationship with God on the basis of faith and faith alone this is why it is sola fide faith alone whereas under Romanism as it was when Martin Luther took his stand and remains to this day it is not by faith alone now our Roman Catholic friends would tell us that they are justified by faith but what does that mean how does that faith get to you and their answer is that faith and grace are appropriated by the individual through the sacraments and when you partake of communion and when you go to confession and when you engage in the things that the

[29 : 38] Catholic Church has established as being necessary those are elements that impart grace to you and when you take communion and you are receiving the wafer you are receiving Christ and the more you partake of communion and the more of Christ you receive through the mouth with the wafer the more you become like Christ now to them this makes perfectly logical sense and the reformers departed from that and said no it is justification we are brought into a right relationship with God on the basis of faith alone that is belief alone faith is belief it is commitment we've talked about the three kinds or the three levels of faith in the past let me just briefly run through those again especially for young people who may be here and they too by the way have a history of

Latin and it is just a very simple thing I'll be as quick as I can with it without the overhead but the first Latin word is called noticia it's n-o-t-i-c-i-a noticia in Latin means notice notice in English you can even see the similarity between the words noticia and notice this is the first level that one must enter before you can come to faith that is you have to be given notice you have to be notified that Jesus Christ is the son of God what he did who he was why he came who sent him and why it mattered that is being put on notice this is what the preaching of the gospel does it puts people on notice it notifies them and upon hearing this information about Jesus Christ all that can be said is that you've just heard the information that's all you've been notified you've been notified that means you have heard of him you have heard

God has a son sent his son died on the cross for our sins that's so you've heard the information you logged it that's something that you have taken into yourself where do you go from there well you have to evaluate that information do you believe that or not if you don't believe it and many people don't they just reject it right there they've been notified but that's as far as they've gone they say yeah I've heard that I've heard that I don't buy it I don't buy it that means they reject the second part of that which is *essentia assentia* is the way the latin spelled it we spell it with english *assent* that means assent assent means agreement you've heard the information about Jesus Christ who he is what he did what it means to you and you either agree with it or you do not agree with it if you give assent to it that means you are saying yes I accept that I believe that that Christ came into the world just like the bible says and I've heard people say I believe all that stuff about Jesus and what the bible says I believe all that that doesn't save anyone you've been notified you agree with the information but if you stop right there nothing happens there is no salvation the third level of belief is called *fidei f-i-d-e-i* *fidei* it's the word from the english or the english word comes from that fidelity fidelity and it fidelity means faithfulness infidelity or an infidel means someone without faith no faith but fidelity means that you have acted on what you have agreed to that involves a commitment and the commitment is done with your will everyone who comes to faith in Christ has to go through those three steps you have to have received the information and been notified you have to agree with it that it is true and thirdly and the last one that brings salvation is there has to be a commitment so you've heard the information you agree with it what have you done about it many people say well I haven't done anything about it what's to do about it I mean something happened 2000 years ago I don't have any control of that what can I do about it you can commit you can believe you can exercise faith you can put your trust your confidence your reliance your trust in the truth of who Jesus Christ is and why he came that's what brings salvation that's called the commitment and it is lacking in the lives of many people who have taken level one and level two and they've stopped right there there's no salvation until there is entrustment to that and you do that with your will in the same way you exercise your will when you stood before someone who was asking you would you take this woman to be your wedded wife and you say I will that's an act of the will now some people think that in order to connect with

God there has to be some kind of a religious foldy role or formula or some kind of spiritual abracadabra no no no no that's all nonsense this is a very simple thing it is an act of the will you do this because you choose to do it it is a deliberate actual commitment that you voluntarily make you exercise the volition that God gave you for which you are going to be accountable and you put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ this is why the scriptures say it is by grace through faith you see grace is the basis grace is the foundation for our salvation faith is the way God's salvation gets to you faith is the response or the answer of the individual to what God has done in Christ and when you embrace Christ as your savior you are extending your faith to him this is why when

[37:10] Paul opens Romans in chapter one he talks about he says the very reason that I was called the very reason that I was raised up to be an apostle to the Gentiles is that I might bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith and interestingly enough he closes out Romans the same way in the last chapter when he says reminding you of my commission is to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith so everyone everyone who has not placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ is living whether they realize it or not they are living a life of direct disobedience to the God of heaven and they probably aren't even aware of it but when they hear the gospel and respond in a positive way that is the obedience of faith and it is something that we are called upon to do because

God has given us the ability to do this is what volition is all about this is why the apostle Paul Paul said God in time past winked at the activities of men as regards his holding them accountable and everything but now act 17 but now in contrast to earlier but now which means after the cross God demands that all men everywhere repent because he has fixed a day wherein he will judge the world by that man and when we respond to that command that God has given we do so as an act of our will we exercise volition and we put our trust in Christ that is salvation or justification by faith it means we are declared to be righteous by God on the basis of our having placed our faith and trust in

Christ and again as I said earlier it doesn't mean that you are righteous or holy in all of your behavior because Christians can sometimes act very unchristianly but it means your official status your standing your position before God is one of absolute perfection because it is based upon what Christ did not upon what you did so it is a difference between your state and your standing your

standing is inviolable your standing cannot be altered your standing cannot be diminished and it cannot be increased because your standing was established by Jesus Christ and he did a perfect work your state that's an entirely different matter your state can be one of carnality your state can be one of disobedience your state can be one of everything that isn't supposed to be as a Christian but that does not affect your standing it affects the caliber of your life it affects your enjoyment of your life and it undoubtedly will affect your rewards or lack thereof but your standing is based upon who and what

Christ did and regarding that the fourth point is probably more than anything else the major sticking point that people have regarding the Christian faith and that is that Christ and Christ alone is God's only method for redemption or salvation and Christians take a lot of criticism for this but we need to remind people who would be critical of our position you're one of those narrow Christians who believes that Jesus is the only way to God our answer is well it's not our idea we didn't think it up this is what God himself has said and so many times in the scriptures this is borne out and Paul says when he writes to the Galatians he said I do not frustrate the grace of God I do not nullify the grace of God I'm not disregarding or discounting the grace of God for if righteousness if righteousness comes by the law or by any other avenue don't you see what that means don't you understand that means that Christ died for nothing do you see where that's going when you make the possibility of salvation available through any other avenue you just canceled out the necessity for Christ's death really he shouldn't have bothered he should have just gone one other way you know we can come to God many paths up the mountain you can go any path you want well that's certainly true if

[42 : 40] Jesus Christ isn't essential to our salvation then there really wasn't any point in his even coming and die he might just as well have stayed in heaven but there isn't any other way and the Savior himself pled with his father that night father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done and then he also said what shall I say what shall I say father save me from this hour I can't do that it's because of this hour that I came into the world he knew precisely what his mission was he fulfilled it God ought to be thanked for having provided anyway for our redemption do you realize that

God did not owe us salvation he did not owe us reconciliation we cannot look at God and say reserve a place in your heaven for me because I've got it coming I deserve it no you don't none of us do that's what makes it so incredible that's why it's good news you get something you don't have coming and that makes the gospel good news and then it is for God's glory and God's