

## Why Presbyterian Part 1: Continuity with Scripture, May 4, 2025

### Let's stand together and read the opening verses of 2Peter 1:20-21.

*<sup>20</sup> Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

#### **Intro and Preview:**

Many times I've been asked why after 30 plus years of being Baptist in Baptist country, we became Presbyterians. I've halfway joked that the apostles were Presbyterians.

#### **Background:**

For over 30 years, most of my life, I have been a Baptist. I was converted at the age of seven in a Disciples of Christ Church but most of our soteriology and other doctrines aligned with the Baptist way. During my early adolescence I began to fall away and was not all that interested in the things of God. As a teenager, I encountered the Baptist outreach at a local church and was attracted to the youth ministry. They had pretty girls and pizza and I liked both. There, the Bible was taught, and I began to attend the church services with some regularity. That is where Shayla and I were to be found every Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday nights. Eventually, my senses were heightened and God captured my focus. I surrendered to the ministry and began to work at the church in various capacities. I was educated at the Criswell Bible College in Dallas, TX earning a BA in Biblical Studies. I attended Dallas Theological Seminary pursuing a ThM degree but changed majors to accommodate growing interest in Philosophy. I returned to Criswell in the Masters of Philosophical Theology degree plan.

During my education, the idea of dispensationalism and covenantal theology rarely came up and when it did, it was minimized. I was not all that familiar with either system or the implications. However, as I read through the Bible, I became convinced of the Doctrines of Grace (5 Points of Calvinism) by the end of my first year in my undergraduate studies. It was only later that I began to understand the distinctives, differences, and nuances of the two systems of theology and how they also related to Reformed Theology in general.

#### **Current:**

Without belaboring various church positions and experiences, let us fast forward almost twenty years. A close friend of mine, whose opinion on theology I greatly appreciate, became a Presbyterian. He was one of the most well-read guys I have ever met. While not having any

professional seminary or theological training, he has consumed, analyzed, and synthesized more information than most pastors I know. Many such professional ministers have been put off by his no-nonsense engagement style and have refused to even engage with him in a meaningful way. I have never met anyone quite like him. The breadth of his knowledge of the current state of Christianity and theological debate in the United States is unsurpassed by anyone I know including myself.

While I don't always agree with him, and we've had some very heated debates, I very much respect his opinion and view on the cross section of Christianity with culture. When he became a Presbyterian, I took note. Other than knowing that Tim Keller and RC Sproul were Presbyterians, I knew almost nothing of the official doctrine. Even though I had taken seminary classes on church history, had read a fair amount of Puritan and Presbyterian theology and even taught a class on church history, I was largely ignorant about the actual theology of Presbyterians. I was a five-point Calvinist and was familiar with the regulative principle for worship. Covenant theology and dispensationalism was not a large part of my theological training even though I went to THE school for dispys (DTS).

Bruce Gore's "Presbyterians and the American Revolution" video series on YouTube was also very influential as our nation's founding has significant ties to Presbyterianism. Our declaration of independence was modeled after (even plagiarized) from the Meclanburg County Declaration issued by New light Presbyterians. Presbys basically wrote the Declaration of Independence that Thomas Jefferson is credited with. Additionally, our form of government was modeled after the Presbyterian form of church government. The people's rights to elect their rulers is taken from the Westminster Standards and Presbyterian practice. Elected representatives who preside over the people is one of the geniuses of our great faith.

So, for lots of reasons with fear and trepidation, I became Presbyterian. Over the next few weeks, we will go over some of the reasons for being Presbyterian. We will highlight some distinctives and see how the Bible teaches what we believe. Today, we will look at the first of these seven reasons:

1. Continuity with the Bible
2. Connection to **History**: All of history, early church, medieval, Reformation, & American
3. Commitment to Solas of the Reformation: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Scripture Alone, To the Glory of God Alone
4. **Calvinism**: Doctrines of Grace
5. Covenant Theology & Confessionalism
6. Church **Government**

## 7. Cultivation of the Mind: Rom 12:1-2

Now, to the Bible...

The context of the original passage has to do with the historical evidence of Christ's coming and then, Peter warns against false teachers.

1:16 "...we did not follow cleverly designed myths... but were eyewitnesses."

2:1 "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you..."

### I. Scripture is not a matter of **private** interpretation (1:20)

Seriously though, all verses must mean *SOMETHING*. It cannot mean whatever we want it to mean, and it doesn't matter what we feel like it means, or even what we think it means. There is an objective meaning to the text. We are not postmoderns who don't believe that truth exists at all or that we don't have access to it. We are not relativists who think that all truth is personal, and reject notions of objectivity.

### II. Scripture is the **word of God** (1:21).

"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." ESV

"No prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." LSB

Peter is saying that Scripture (the Bible) is fully the word of God, even though it was written by man, God is the ultimate Author.

**2Tim 3:16** "All scripture is God breathed, and profitable for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be fully equipped, having been thoroughly trained for every good work." LSB

The "God breathed" (LSB, NIV, and ESV) is much preferred over "given by inspiration" from the NASB or NKJ. The Scriptures were expired or breathed out by God. They are not simply inspiring epithets from God.

The Bible is God's weapon. It is what He uses to accomplish His will. In Romans 10 we see that God uses the proclamation of His word as the means to call people to faith. The Bible does something. It cuts like a sword. The Spirit of God inspires the Bible and He also uses the Bible to move people along.

**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.”

**Ephesians 6:17** “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”

The Spirit of God uses the word of God. If you want to be led by the Spirit, you should immerse yourself in the Bible and do what it says.

**III. Both Old and New Testaments are included (2Pt 3:15-16). All of the Bible is God’s word OT Prophecy and NT Paul.**

Direct reference to Paul’s writings (15)

Connection with “the rest of the **Scriptures**” (16)

We as Old School, New Side, Presbyterians have a staunch commitment to the Bible. The reason we are number one reason that we are Presbyterian is that we believe the Presbyterian way is the best reflection of what the Bible teaches. We are in continuity with the Bible.

Presbyterianism is not about personal preference. We do not do it because we like it. We are not Presbyterian because we were raised that way. We believe the Bible teaches a form of Christianity that most closely aligns with Presbyterianism. If we didn’t believe the Bible teaches it, we wouldn’t believe it. We would be and do something else.

We believe that the Bible is the holy, authoritative, inspired, inerrant word of God. We are people of the book. There are other denominations that have a similar view of Scripture including the Southern Baptists, Assembly of God (maybe). However, we part with those who say that the Bible *contains* the word of God. They see the Bible as a magic book either of incantations or chicken soup for the soul. We also part with the Roman Catholic Church who say that the Bible is superseded by the authority of the church. We believe Scripture over the church not the other way around.

I have listed six things that we as Presbyterians believe about the Bible and have listed references to the Westminster Confession of Faith. These are a summation of the ten points in chapter 1 that I highly recommend. If you get a copy of the WCF with proof texts, it will list all the references in the Bible.

1. **Necessity of Scripture:** The Bible is necessary for knowing God's will for salvation, as the light of nature and creation are insufficient (WCF 1.1).
2. **Inspiration and Authority:** The Scriptures (66 books of the Old and New Testaments) are the inspired Word of God, given by divine inspiration, and are the ultimate authority for faith and practice (WCF 1.2, 1.4).
3. **Inerrancy and Sufficiency:** The Bible is infallible and inerrant in its original manuscripts, containing all things necessary for God's glory, human salvation, faith, and life. No additional revelation is needed (WCF 1.5, 1.6).
4. **Clarity:** The Scriptures are clear in matters essential to salvation, though some parts may require diligent study (WCF 1.7). (Persecution of Scripture & Priesthood of Believers)
5. **Preservation and Translation:** God has providentially preserved the Scriptures, and they should be translated into common languages for accessibility (WCF 1.8).
6. **Interpretation:** The Bible interprets itself, with clearer passages shedding light on less clear ones, and the Holy Spirit aids believers in understanding (WCF 1.9, 1.10). (W/ confessions, church history and enlightened by the Spirit).

### **Conclusion:**

We Presbyterians are people **of the book**. We are Presbyterians because of our continuity with the Bible.

### **Application:**

1. **Know** what you believe and why. If you want to know God, you must know His word. John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
2. Read, study, meditate on, and **obey** God through the Bible.  
 Read systematically, not haphazardly. Yearly.  
 Study books and themes. You're invited to listen to our men's study through Genesis.  
 Meditate on it, pray it, think about it and chew on it.  
 Obey God. How can you obey what you don't know? You can't. But, the end goal is not simply awareness or knowledge, it is submission to Christ and His rule, for your joy and His glory.

**Closing prayer:** Father, help us by Your Spirit to be people of the book, for the sake of Christ. Seal up Your word in our hearts that we might not sin against You. As we come to the table of

communion, help us to remember that Christ gave His life as a ransom for many. In Christ's name, Amen.