

# The Protestant Reformation What It is and Why it Matters

A Study

## Part 6- The Re-Discovery of the Majesty of the Glory of God- "Soli Deo Gloria"

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February 08, 2015

### Isaiah 43:1-21

**1** But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

**2** "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

**3** "For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place.

**4** "Since you are precious in My sight, *Since* you are honored and I love you, I will give *other* men in your place and *other* peoples in exchange for your life.

**5** "Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.

**6** "I will say to the north, 'Give *them* up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold *them* back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth,

**7** Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

**8** Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears.

**9** All the nations have gathered together So that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, "It is true."

**10** "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.

**11 "I, even I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me.**

**12 "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange *god* among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And I am God.**

**13 "Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"**

**14 Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.**

**15 "I am the Lord, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King."**

**16 Thus says the Lord, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters,**

**17 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together *and* not rise again; They have been quenched *and* extinguished like a wick):**

**18 "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.**

**19 "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.**

**20 "The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people.**

**21 "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.**

**1Corinthians 10:31**

**Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

**1John 2:12**

**I write unto you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for his Name's sake.**

To the Glory of God Alone

Now it is evident that God moves throughout His Creation. God creates and raises up, and God also pulls down. God saves and forgives, and He judges and damns. All of human history is really only the

*observation* of the Providence of God intervening in the affairs of Man throughout time.

But *why* does God do what He does? *Why* does God do *this*, but not *that*? *Why* does God raise up a mountain over there, but not here? *Why* does God create a galaxy there, but not here? *Why* does God bless this nation, but not the other nation? *Why* does God allow suffering to come to these people while seemingly keep suffering from the other one? *Why* does God heal this person, but not the other one, and *why* does God save this one, but not that one?

As we observe what God does and what God does *not* do- are we to assume that God is arbitrary or capricious? Does God simply push His Weight around *arbitrarily*? Should we come to the conclusion that the Almighty is as frivolous or unconcerned as the deists teach? Or does the Holy Bible teach us that there is an "Overriding Principle" and a "Primary Passion" that motivates and that lays behind all of God's Actions and Words?

The main goal of this Sermon is to give you Biblical Evidence that will show you the primary Reason behind all of God's Thoughts, Actions, Deeds, Words, and Desires. In this Sermon- you will find that the Holy Bible declares that there are three main Reasons why God does what He does- three main ways in which God Himself in Scripture expresses the Overriding Principle behind all that God does and says:

1. For His Own Glory
2. For His Name's Sake
3. So that the people of the earth will know that there is none like unto God

... and these three statements are repeated over and over throughout all of Scripture- in both the Old and New Testaments- so that we come to the conclusion that the great God that we love and serve and strive to obey does all that He does based on what will bring Himself the most Glory. And so as His children- we are to mimic our Lord and do all that we do- to His Glory as well.

Now, those of you who have been in this Church for any length of time have heard me preach on the Glory of God many times and in many ways because this subject is central to my entire Ministry. And so I have taught about this in many different ways at different times.

But keep in mind that we are going through a Study on the Protestant Reformation and what the Reformation gave to us- and so I will deal with this issue in a very narrow way today. And however long this Sermon may seem to you- know that I already threw away 17 additional pages.

But as I told you on the first installment- the Protestant Reformation was *not* simply a *misunderstanding* over issues that don't really matter. It was *not* a *political* argument over who was supposed to be the king. And it was *not* a dispute over personalities. Protestants and Catholics are *not* divided because of some ignorant bias or some prejudice or bigotry. We are divided over two primary issues:

1. How lost people are forgiven and saved?
2. Who or what has final Authority in the Church?

And those are heady and weighty and eternal issues that *transcend* personalities and politics. So, for example- when you hear people say today that it doesn't matter if their daughter is dating a Roman Catholic boy because we are all on our way to Heaven together- then know that those statements are silly and trite and a compromise because they are either *minimizing* the Biblical issues that brought about the great divide or they are simply ignoring them. But the Reformation itself was not silly, it was not trite- it was huge and massive and should matter to us today.

And one of those "re-discoveries" was that the God of the Bible is the most Beautiful, Wonderful, Glorious, Majestic, and Joyful Beings in the Universe. So one of the great gifts that the Reformers gave to us all was the *re-discovery* that the God Who is manifested in sacred Scripture is infinitely *worthy* of our praise and our service and our devotion and our obedience and our allegiance- that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is *entitled* to be magnified and exalted and loved and feared and enjoyed by all of His Creation, and that everything we do and think and say and believe should be to His Glory and to His Glory alone.

Truly a Being- Who has all of the Divine Attributes that are contained within the pages of this inerrant Book- *deserves* adoration and worship and obedience because it is the summation of all that God is- in all His particular Excellencies- that make God to be God. And

because that is true- we must understand that we are not *noble* for worshipping a God like this- we are simply giving to God that which God is *entitled* to receive from His Own Creation. **Psalms 147:1** says:

**Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming.** (beautiful; fitting; appropriate).

So through the *re-discovery* of Biblical Truth 500 years ago- the very first thing that came to the forefront of the minds of those who could once again actually read the sacred Text- the *informed* and *reasoned* conclusion that dawned on everybody collectively- was that it is right and proper and correct for Man to worship and obey and love and glorify this great God- and therefore- it is evil, wicked, and sinful not to. And yet- as they continued to become once again enamored by the Owner and Creator of the Universe- the Reformers also found out that the degree to which we truly *enjoy* and *delight ourselves* in worshipping God is predicated on the amount of Biblical Truth that we understand about Him.

In other words- it is not hard- it is *impossible* for human beings to love and serve (on any meaningful level) an "unknown god". So the full and correct Biblical knowledge of God from Scripture is the "catalyst" or the "foundation" for our love for God and our service to God and our worship of God and our ability to bring Him Glory. So when the knowledge of God in Scripture is *hidden* or when it is *laid waste*- our love for God becomes paper thin, our service of God is reduced to "whenever we feel like it" or "when it is convenient" or "not at all", and worship is *devalued* and *trivialized* to being little more than a group therapy session. And that was the picture 500 years ago- but sadly that is the picture of much of the modern Church of our own day as well.

So the Reformers discovered a Principal that must be understood- that love- true love, real love, deep and abiding love is *always* predicated upon three things being true:

- A. We must Respect the one we love
- B. We must Admire the one we love
- C. We must be in Awe of the one we love

... and all three of these things should be ever growing concerning the one to whom we have set our love upon. And without these three things being present- human beings may have some level of very shallow affection for someone else- but true love that is deep and abiding and growing will simply not exist. And that is true because respect, admiration, and awe for someone else is *predicated* on us having knowledge of the one we desire to love.

Now keep in mind that what I just described to you is the way in which we love God. But it is *not* the Way that God loves us. Our love for God must grow- but God's love for us is full from the beginning- from *before* the foundations of the world, *before* we were born, and *before* we did anything- good or bad. So our love is predicated on these three things being true- but God's Love for us is *not* predicated on them at all, but is based solely on His Own Divine Prerogative to set His Love on those whom He chooses.

Now today- it is common to hear people say, "*In order to love someone- you have to spend time with them*". And this is true. But I suggest that the reason why you have to spend time with the one that you hope to love is so you may know and understand them better. This is what God Himself said about this subject in **Jeremiah 9:23&24**:

**23 Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.**

... so if we are to understand and know God- so that we may love and obey and worship God- so that we may glorify God- then we are going to have to spend time with God in His Word.

And until we re-discover Who God is from the pages of Holy Scripture- *none* of our marriages and *none* of our businesses and *none* of our lives will exist for God's Glory and for God's Glory alone. Until we are once again enthralled and overwhelmed by the individual parts of the very Character and Nature of the God of the Bible- we will continue to love things that God made and that are passing away *as much* or even *more* than we love God. And as long as we remain ignorant of

what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture- we will invariably rob God of *some* or *all* of the Glory that should rightly go to Him alone.

Now the visible Church of 500 years ago had *purposely* and *officially* and *systematically* hidden the Scriptures from the people. And that absence of the Word of God served to make the people of God ignorant about the only thing that really matters, and that is- the knowledge of God. And so while they were well versed in ecclesiastical rituals and ceremonies and religious trinkets- the people did not know God or the various particularities of His Holiness that collectively make God to be worthy of our worship and service and love. And result was exactly what the Prophet Isaiah warned about- 700 years before Jesus was born in **Isaiah 29:13**:

**Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,**

It is from this very Passage that the Reformers began to develop a watershed doctrine that has defined historic Protestantism for over 500 years- and that is- "The Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer".

Now back under the partial Revelation of God in the Old Covenant- God instituted the Levitical Priesthood- which accomplished three main tasks:

1. Offered Sacrifices on behalf of themselves and the people
2. Acted as intercessors between the people and God
3. Taught the people the Word of the Lord

But under the final, full, and completed Revelation of God in the New Covenant- the concept of a sinful human Priesthood who offered animal sacrifices and who stood between the people and God was supplanted by an infinitely superior *model*- the Lord Jesus Christ- Who was:

- A Superior Priest (eternal/sinless)
- A Superior Sacrifice (Once for all)
- A Superior Covenant (Between God and God)

- A Superior Promises (Forgiveness and Salvation by Grace through Faith alone)

And so now this Jesus is called,

### **Hebrews 3:1b**

**... the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;**

... and all genuinely born again believers are called,

### **The Revelation 1:6b**

**... He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

### **The Revelation 5:10**

**You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."**

### **The Revelation 20:6**

**Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

So combined with what we learned last week about "Solus Christus" and that the Bible says in **1 Timothy 2:5:**

**For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,**

... the Reformers *re-discovered* that every genuinely "born from above" believer was a priest unto God, and that there was only one Man- the Lord Jesus Christ- Who was to act as an "intermediator" or a "Mediator" or an "Intercessor" between human beings and God.

You see, over the centuries- as the visible Church became involved more and more deeply with politics and the affairs of this life- the Church created an ecclesiastical hierarchy that ruled over the people. And the longer they stayed away from the concept of "Sola Scriptura"- the longer and more detailed and more complicated this hierarchy became.

So the people had to go to the local priest to even hear the Word of God or to know the difference between what was pleasing to God and what was forbidden, and the priest had to go to the bishops and the bishops had to go to the arch-bishops and the arch-bishops had to go to the Cardinals and the Cardinals had to go to the pope and the pope went directly to God and issued edicts that defined Truth.

But the Reformers re-discovered the Truth that under the New Covenant- each and every individual believer could go directly to God through Jesus Christ, and that it was Scripture and not the edicts and pronouncements by the pope or Church Councils that established Doctrine, and that defined what was pleasing to God and what was sin.

And as I told you in previous sermons- the fact that the visible church leaders of that day kept the people ignorant of Scripture- also kept them in great and profound spiritual darkness. But as the Light of God's Truth began to pour into the mind and hearts of God's people through the re-discovery of inspired Scripture- the people were literally dancing in the streets.

Therefore- any religious system on earth since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that has in its core beliefs and practices a "human *hierarchical* system involving a priesthood"- is unbiblical and is opposed to the very fabric of the New Testament. At best- any hierarchical priesthood system on earth today would be an Old Covenant system- but that would- by default deny both the Authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church- and would- by definition- be "antichrist". But even at that- the ecclesiastical system developed by Rome over the centuries- that has an ever escalating system of priests is not only unbiblical- it is ungodly because it *diminishes* or outright *denies* both the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood of the Believer.

So we must understand that the New Covenant does *not* establish a hierarchy of priests- where the higher up the food chain you go- the closer to God you are and the more Authority in the Church you have. Rather the New Covenant establishes a Theocracy- where King Jesus rules supreme over everything and everyone in the Church- through His Word. And every believer- from the Pastor to the Elders to the Deacons to all the genuinely saved- are all bowed down together at His Feet and are all submitted to the Authority of Holy Scripture.

And so the very first component of "The Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer" is that every truly saved person is to have *individual*

contact with sacred Scripture and with God- through the Apostle and High Priest of *all* the saved- Jesus Christ. And *this* is the part of this wonderful Truth- that is almost universally taught today- but sadly it is usually the *only* part of this Doctrine that is taught.

But the second part of this Doctrine that is seldom if ever taught- is that while each genuine believer is to have "individual contact" with Scripture and with God in Christ- that contact is "not individually defined"- but is to *always* be in accord with sacred Scripture.

So while all believers have the freedom to read and know Scripture individually- they do *not* have the right to make the Scripture say what they individually want them to say- but all believers must bow their knee and submit themselves to the one, single, correct interpretation of every single verse or Passage in the Bible- that has been carefully and prayerfully arrived at through the Literal, Historical, and Grammatical method of interpretation.

In other words- while it is true that all believers are now free to read and study their Bibles and pray directly to God through Jesus Christ- they are *not* free to make stuff up. They are *not* free to twist the Scriptures or to take the Scriptures out of context. Believers are *not* free to formulate man-made and false doctrines any more than the leaders of the Roman system were.

So if all you get out of the Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer is that *you* are now the pope and that by virtue of *you* being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit- that *you* now have the right and the power to interpret Scripture and to formulate Doctrines out of your own limited mind and human reasoning- then you have completely missed the entire point of what the Reformers taught, and what you are *doing* and the reasoning *behind* what you are doing is no different than what the leaders of the Roman system have been doing for centuries. And if you're going to do this- then at least be honest about it and please don't call yourself a "Bible believing Christian" or a "Protestant"- because you're not.

The Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer teaches that while all genuinely saved people have the freedom and the liberty to now read God's precious Word ourselves- we also have the *responsibility* to read and study it and preach and teach it- *correctly*. The Protestant Reformation did not give *anybody* the right or the freedom to wing it, or

to hit the high points and move on, or twist it or to take what Almighty God said out of context.

And yet I am sad to report to you this morning that God's Word is being maligned and taken out of context and twisted and abused and misused more by so-called "Protestants" in our day than at any point in the history of Christianity. And there is an active and ongoing and seemingly relentless effort by many in the modern Church to make up new and exciting "doctrines" that are captivating millions and to re-package ancient heresies so they can lead the sheep to slaughter. And to add insult to injury- they do all this in the "name of" being filled with the Spirit and in the "name of" using the glorious Truth of the "Priesthood of the Believer" as their authority. And I cry out against this perversion of what the Reformers said and did, and I denounce this effort as being evil and a tool of the devil.

The reason that so many within the modern Church offer such a shallow and surface and frivolous obedience to God is a direct result of *not* seeing the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ through the systematic preaching and teaching of God's Word. In other words- we are simply *repeating* the mistakes of the past, and the people of God, after the Church being on earth for 2,000 years- for the most part, are once again ignorant of Who God is. And this glaring ignorance is hindering us in giving God Glory in everything that we do or think or believe or say- precisely because we no longer know.

The reason that there is little or no resistance of sin by the average believer today, and that Biblical repentance is considered to be "harsh" and "mean", and the genuine pursuit of Biblical Holiness is regarded by so many as being "legalism" is a direct result of man-made and false doctrines being proclaimed by the leaders of the modern Church in the name of hearing directly from God while becoming more ignorant of the Bible and of God. And nobody in that condition can give God Glory.

The ongoing, relentless, and systematic casting off of the concepts that we have already studied of "Sola Scriptura" and "Sola Fide" and "Sola Gratia" and "Solus Christus" has resulted in the "emasculatation" of the modern visible Protestant Church. And the complete unhinging and dis-connection that the visible Church has with any of the hard fought battles and amazing struggles and the great victories of the past has resulted in the "feminization" of much of modern Ministry because

human feelings and unreliable emotions have now taken precedent over the Divine Truth of Scripture.

Listen- the Reformers found that as our knowledge of God grows and becomes richer and fuller and more Biblical- our respect and admiration and awe of God will also grow. And as these three qualities grow in us- our love for God will become deep and abiding. And that kind of love, in turn, will produce the kind of devotion and obedience and worship and steadfastness from us that God so richly deserves and that will result in God being glorified the most.

So, the Reformers *re-discovered* that by *systematically* and *consistently* learning about God from Scripture and from Scripture alone- these three forgotten qualities will be revived in us and that will produce within us the kind of deep and abiding love that will then produce humble and joyful obedience and "spirit and truth worship" towards this Great God. And the Latin phrase that summarizes this effort is:

"Soli Deo Gloria"- to the Glory of God alone.

... that everything we, as believers, do and think and believe and say and sing will be to God's Glory and to God's Glory- alone! And so to facilitate this re-discovery that all that we do and say and think and enjoy should be to the Glory of God and to the Glory of God alone- the Reformers gave us great and deep and profound and weighty "Confessions of Faith" that were designed to be explored and learned and challenged and experienced- that were entirely Biblical and that could be used to keep us from false teaching, and to develop this respect and awe and admiration for God and His Ways. And among them were:

- ✓ Zwingli's 67 Articles (1523)
- ✓ The Augsburg Confession (1530)
- ✓ The Geneva Confession (1536)
- ✓ The French Confession (1559)
- ✓ The Scotts Confession (1560)
- ✓ The Canons of Dordt (1619)
- ✓ The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)
- ✓ The London Baptist Confession (1689)

... where every single tenet of the Faith was examined and was brought under the Authority of sacred Scripture- or it was cast out and discarded as being the invention of Man. And from these majestic works came forth various "Catechisms" that were in effect summaries of the larger "Confessions" like:

- ✓ Luther's Catechism (1527)
- ✓ The 39 Articles (1540)
- ✓ The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)
- ✓ The Westminster Catechism (1649)
- ✓ The Baptist Catechism (1689)

### **1Corinthians 14:19**

**however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.**

### **Galatians 6:6**

**The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*.**

### **The Acts 18:25**

**This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;**

Now in each of these three verses- the Greek word that was translated into English variously as "**instruct**", "**instructed**", "**teaches**", "**taught**", or "**teaching**" is *katecheo* (CAT-eh-KAY-oh). And it is from this Greek word that we get our English word "catechize". So to "catechize" someone, therefore, is to simply *teach* them *Biblical Truth in an orderly and systematic way*. And down through the centuries- the best way to accomplish that effort is through a series of Questions accompanied by Biblical support and explanation so that the student may learn the correct Biblical Answer.

And as he developed his Catechism in 1527- Martin Luther said,

“If we do not teach the next generation of believers the fundamentals of the Christian Faith- all that we have done will have been for naught.”<sup>1</sup>

... so ever since the early 1500's one of the distinguishing hallmarks of historic Protestantism is the use of Catechisms. "The Christian Catechism" that we use in this Church every Sunday morning was developed in 1689 in the city of London, England, and is one of the oldest Baptist documents on record. It was adopted in America by the *Philadelphia Baptist Association* in 1742 and was used in most all Baptist Churches in the United States until the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century- when Sound Biblical Truth went "out of fashion" and gave way to emotionalism, psychology, and spiritual entertainment.

The Baptist Catechism is patterned after the well-known Reformed **Westminster Catechism**- with appropriate changes made for "believers baptism" as opposed to "infant baptism". And the few comments in the earlier "Questions" were designed to help parents make Biblical Truths plain to their children during Family Devotions.

Now it is amazing to me that 500 years after the Reformation- there are many within the modern Church- who lay claim to being the modern day heirs of the Reformation who nonetheless actually argue *against* using Confessions and Catechisms at all- completely ignoring the fact that learning the Scriptures in an ongoing systematic way has proven to be the single best method of knowing the Scriptures so that God will be glorified in all things.

So to answer those who argue against using the historic Catechisms and Confessions- let us examine the only question that really matters and that is:

### **Was There a Particular Pattern in Which Biblical Truth was Taught in the Early Church?**

... and upon investigation- we find that there are several Biblical texts that suggest that there was. For example, in **Romans 6:17** Paul gives thanks that,

**... you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,**

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther; *Table Talk*

The Apostle told the young pastor of the Church at Ephesus in **2Timothy 1:13:**

**Retain** (hold faithfully/follow) **the standard of sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Dr. Luke wrote in **The Acts 2:42a:**

**They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching...**

Paul gave an Apostolic Command in **2Thessalonians 2:15:**

**So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught**, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

And the Apostle said this in **The Acts 20:27:**

**For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.**

So from this we see that even in the early days of the Christian Church- there was a defined and official *body* of authoritative Teaching that had been developed by the Church which we now call, "The New Testament". But we must also say that there was also a defined and formal "way" or a "means" by which that defined body of Teaching was *systematically* and *continually* given to the people of the Church. And that "way" or that "means" was through ongoing, systematic teaching- like what we find today in the Reformed Catechisms and Confessions.

Now keep in mind that we know from history that the 27 Books of the New Testament were not compiled into a single collection until hundreds of years after the death of the Apostles. So no single Church had all of the original New Testament Books, and yet we see in these verses- that way *before* the assembling of the Canon- that the people of the Church were engaged in some type of ongoing, formal, and systematic instruction in the Truth of Scripture. So we see that copies of the original autographs that were Divinely inspired were made.

But then notice that not only are we told to *possess* the entire scope of inspired writings- but we are also commanded that we are to follow the example of *how* the whole counsel of God is to be taught.

So the Holy Bible records that there was a formal, complete, and *systematic* way in which the people of the early Church were being taught the Word of God- most probably through the use of various catechisms. And the concept of "Sola Scriptura" demands that we follow that same method today.

Now why is all this important to us today? And I ask this question because the last thing that I want and the last thing that the Reformers were trying to instill was that we all become academics or intellectuals. And yet we can plainly see that Bible ignorance is no virtue either. So I suggest to you that the Bible clearly teaches that there are at least five main reasons *why* God's people should be taught the Word of God and the basic elements of Christianity *systematically* and in an *ongoing* and *formal* method:

1. Because All Believers are Required to Know the Truth
2. Because There are Many Deceivers Determined to Pervert the Way of the Lord
3. Because Deep and Profound Biblical Truths Must be Explained Properly
4. Because We Live in the Last Days
5. Because Biblically Adept Leaders Must be Raised Up to Teach Each Succeeding Generation

So let's examine each one.

## **1. Because All Believers are Required to Know the Truth**

**Matthew 28:18b-20**

**18 ... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

**19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

**20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

**Colossians 1:23**

**... continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.**

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

**11** And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

**12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

**13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

**14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

**15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

**16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

## **2. Because There are Many Deceivers Determined to Pervert the Way of the Lord**

### **Titus 1:9-11**

**9** holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

**10** For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

**11** who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.

### **1 John 2:26**

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

### **1 John 4:1**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

### **Jude 3-4**

**3** Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

**4** For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

### **3. Because Deep and Profound Biblical Truths Must be Explained Properly**

#### **Hosea 4:6**

**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

#### **1 Corinthians 2:12-13**

**12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

**13** which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

#### **2 Peter 3:15b-18**

**15** ... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

**16** as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

**17** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

**18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

### **4. Because We Live in the Last Days**

#### **1 Timothy 4:1**

**But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,**

**2 Timothy 4:1-5**

**4 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.**

## **5. Because Biblically Adept Leaders Must be Raised up to Teach Each Succeeding Generation**

**1 Timothy 4:6**

**In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.**

**1 Timothy 4:11**

**Prescribe and teach these things.**

**2 Timothy 2:2**

**The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**

**Titus 1:9**

**holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**

... and all of this matters- because God is worthy of being Glorified and we simply do *not* glorify Him without having an intimate Knowledge of Him, and we do not have an intimate Knowledge of God without spending time in Scripture.

But why not just leave all this Study up to individuals to carry out as they “feel led” to? Well, first of all- the “individualism” of our American culture that has manifested itself now for over 100 years has *not* brought forth godliness and holiness on any large scale. So I see this kind of “rugged individualism” as actually being a *hindrance* to Biblical understanding and of knowing and understanding and obeying Objective Propositional and Eternal Divine Truth. So leaving Biblical instruction up to individuals to develop and implement and understand as they see fit- doesn’t have a very good track record.

Secondly, leaving people to study God’s Word by themselves is the pattern that most Churches follow today, and it is the pattern that has defined Protestantism for the last 100 years. And yet- allowing the people of the modern Church to “do their own thing” as it comes to Biblical Interpretation and Study has produced the most confused, contradictory, weak, and inconsistent believers that the Christian Church has ever known. The people of the modern Church today are- by and large- more ignorant of God and the Bible than at any time in Church History. And the result of this “self-inflicted ignorance” is that God is not being glorified. So the very popular method of allowing people to learn the Bible on their own that has been employed over the last hundred years has been an abject failure and should be discarded immediately.

We live in a day when personal opinion has been elevated to the level of being “Truth”, while the Divine Truth of Scripture is often relegated to being nothing more than “*that’s your opinion*” or “*that’s your interpretation*”. We must understand that Divine Truth is an eternally fixed Reality that is not affected or altered by time, societal changes, human development, or personal preferences. In order for anyone to know God, God’s Will, or God’s Way- they must rightly and fully understand God’s Word. Therefore, the systematic and ongoing teaching of the Scriptures is and has always been and should always be- the main focus of the Christian Church.

We must remember that the Great Commission not only commands that we “go and tell”, but that we also “baptize and teach”. And as we teach believers to obey everything that Jesus taught- we really only have a few options. For example- we can teach God’s Word:

- ✓ Inconsistently or Consistently

- ✓ Haphazardly or Systematically
- ✓ Sporadically or Continually
- ✓ With Untrained Amateurs or with Trained and Called Teachers

We see absolutely no value in teaching God's Word other than by Trained and Called Men who teach the Scriptures in a Consistent, Systematic, and Continuous way. And the single best proven way of doing that- is through the use of a Catechism that is 100% Biblical, and that has blessed the lives of countless believers way before we were ever born.

It is also important to know that my goal in encouraging you to read and use Catechisms and Confessions is *not* to teach you Baptist or Presbyterian or even Reformed Theology- but Biblical Truth. There are many items in the Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms as well as the 39 Articles (which are predominately Presbyterian and Anglican) that are very helpful and useful for every believer- precisely because they are Biblical- and so there is no reason why we shouldn't employ those items in our teaching as well.

Our goal and effort is to comprehend all that God has revealed in Scripture so that we know God, love God, and enjoy God forever. And that will result in us glorifying God in all that we do and say and think and believe.

So I pray that you will follow in the lines of the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and that you, too, will *re-discover* the Truths of God's Word through an ongoing and systematic use of the historic Confessions and Catechism that we have available for you in print form or on the Church's website- with the goal being to increase your knowledge of the God of the Bible so that you will bring God Glory in all that you say and do. Soli Deo Gloria!

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.