

The Protestant Reformation

What It is and Why it Matters

A Study

Part 1- Introduction to the Reformation

Post Tennebras Lux

January 4, 2015

Romans 3:19-28

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

To the Glory of God

Now last October- we began the 7th year of our verse by verse “journey” through Dr. Luke’s Gospel and last week we concluded Chapter 15 by examining the parable of the Prodigal Son, and we have yet 9 more Chapters to cover. And hopefully, when we reach the sermon that includes **Luke 24:53**- we will have seen the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, and we all will be more hungry for Jesus than ever before, and we will have eyes that see the Glory of God more clearly and ears that hear God’s Word better and a heart that believes Divine Truth more easily than ever before. That is why I am going through Luke.

But as has been my custom now for a number of years- I want to begin this new year of 2015 by taking a short “vacation” from our “journey” through the Gospel of Luke and examine a subject that is pertinent to us. And this year I was drawn to explore what the Protestant Reformation was and is and why it matters to us today in the 21st Century.

So why are there Protestants and Catholics? Why is the Church divided? Isn’t division wrong? What is it that we are supposed to be “protesting”? What were the issues- back 500 years ago- that caused all the uproar? Is it a big deal today? Did the Reformation succeed? Do we still need to be divided? These are questions that deserve answers and that hopefully will be answered in this series.

Now I want to begin by stressing to you this morning that the Protestant Reformation was *not* simply a misunderstanding over theological issues that don’t really matter. It was *not* a political argument over who was supposed to be king. And it was *not* a dispute over personalities. Protestants and Catholics are *not* divided because of some bias or some prejudice or bigotry. We are divided because we do not agree on how lost people are forgiven and saved. And we are divided over who or what has final Authority in the Church. And those are heady and weighty and eternal issues that *transcend* personalities and politics. So when you hear people say today that it doesn’t matter if a person is a Protestant or a Catholic and that we are all on our way to Heaven together- then know that those statements are silly and trite and are minimizing the Biblical issues that brought about the divide.

But the Reformation itself is not silly, it is not trite- it is huge and massive.

And I also want to stress to you that I will not engage in base name calling or drive-by attacks against people and events in this series. And while it is impossible to discuss the Reformation and not get into the issues that caused it- I will endeavor to deal with these issues fairly and accurately and biblically.

Now there are a dozen different ways to discuss the Protestant Reformation- but I want to spend our time looking at this magnificent season of human history by examining the Biblical and the Theological issues that were at stake then and that are still at stake in our day- and not simply go through a history lesson of dates and men whom God used greatly to bring us to this point. So our time looking at The Protestant Reformation from the Bible as we begin the new year will be spent dealing with the important Scriptural issues that were being looked at and challenged and promoted and re-discovered 500 years ago and how these issues affect us today.

Now by God's Grace- as God began to lead me out of a very sincere but unbiblical understanding of Truth some 14 years ago, and as I came to fully embrace Biblical Christianity- I basically *re-discovered* the Grace of God- which had been hidden and obscured from my eyes due to several unbiblical practices and teachings. And that re-discovery was- for me- a "mini-reformation". So that is how you should look at the Protestant Reformation- as a *re-discovery* of Biblical Truth that had become hidden and obscure through ecclesiastical mismanagement and abuse and a whole host of man-made and false teaching. So here is what you should know. The Protestant Reformation was:

- ✓ A Reformation- not a Revolt
- ✓ A "re-discovery" of Biblical Truth- not the creation of a new religion
- ✓ A Return to Scriptural Authority not a Rebellion against Christ's Church
- ✓ A sincere Call to Repentance- not an angry diatribe

But as I personally grew in my re-discovered admiration and love for the majesty of God's Grace shown through Jesus Christ- I became greatly troubled to see just how few people today really understand

what the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century was really all about and why it should matter to those of us who live and breathe today. I mean, after all, we live in a technologically advanced culture of Internet and smart phones, and we are people of science, and so why should we care about what a bunch of men with beards and robes said 500 years ago- we surely have evolved way beyond all that, right?

But let me begin by saying that what was at stake 500 years ago with those men is the very same thing that is at stake this morning with us- which is the single greatest and most important question that anybody could ever ask or answer and that is:

How are we- who are patently sinful people
going to pass through God's Judgment on our lives?

... in other words- how are lost sinners made right with God? How does an infinitely Holy and magnificently Righteous God forgive and rescue unworthy sinners? How are human beings forgiven and justified before God? By what process? What are the elements that are and that are *not* included in that marvelous Act of Salvation? And this matters to us today because the Apostle Paul wrote in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you,

Romans 3:22b

22 ... for there is no distinction;

Paul says here that there is no distinction between the Jew- who is trying to keep the Law, and the Gentile who doesn't even know the Law. No distinction; no difference. Paul is saying that the man who is trying to keep the Law of God so that he can earn his Salvation is the same as the man who isn't even trying to keep the Law at all!

Now almost everybody would agree that the man who isn't even trying to keep the Law is bad; he is wrong. But those same people would also say that the man who is at least *trying* to keep the Law of God is a "good man", that he is "noble" and "honorable", and they would praise a man like that and give him a degree of honor because in their minds- he has earned it. And they would even try to emulate such a man. And yet Paul says right here that there is no distinction at all between the two kinds of people.

In other words- Paul says here that there isn't any difference at all between a man who is trying to earn Salvation by what he is doing- in this case trying to keep the Law of God- and the man who isn't even trying at all to do anything at all to earn Salvation.

What? What in the world does that mean? Why would Paul say that? This just seems wrong- it just doesn't sound right. This goes against every instinct in our bodies. So is the Apostle saying that we shouldn't even *try* to keep the Law? Well, the answer is "Yes" and "No". We are to strive to keep God's Law in one sense but we are not to keep God's Law in another sense.

The Answer is "Yes" we are to strive to keep God's Law, in the sense that we who are already saved are *commanded* to strive against the lusts of our flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in our daily lives- all to the Glory of God. In other words- *after we are saved*- we are commanded to strive to keep God's eternal Moral Law as a loving *response* to already being saved in two ways:

1. As a joyful act of worship
2. As a means of our own Sanctification

... which only people who are already saved can do. But the answer is "No", we are *not* to strive to keep God's Law in the sense of us struggling to keep God's Law as a means by which we are saved in the first place. So we are *forbidden* to strive to keep God's Law in the sense that Salvation is some sort of "payment" to "reward" us for our labor at trying to keep God's Law or that Salvation is something that we *earn* and that God is *obligated* to give by the means of us striving to keep God's Law.

That is what Paul is saying here in terms of keeping the Law of God in order to earn Salvation, or in order to make ourselves pleasing to God enough where He will save us, or in the sense of trying to do something that will grab God's attention and make us attractive enough to God where He will save us- which is why Paul said,

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

But *why* is there no distinction between the person who is trying to keep God's Law to earn Salvation and the one who is not? Look again at the next verse:

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

So there isn't anything wrong with God's Law. Paul is *not* discussing some malfunction or deficiency in God's Law here. No, he said in **Romans 7:12:**

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

So the problem is *not* that there is something wrong with God's Law- no, the problem is with *us*- we can't keep God's Law. *Nobody* keeps God's Law. Not a single soul on earth keeps God's Law. Moses didn't keep God's Law. And the result is that **Romans 3:23** says that we are all sinners. So every Jew who is striving to keep God's Law in order to earn Salvation is a sinner, and every Gentile who doesn't even know there is a Law and couldn't care less is also a sinner. There is no distinction. But why is that?

Because the only way that keeping God's Law can save anybody is if they keep it *perfectly* and *continuously* in thought, word, and deed- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week for their entire lives! But if that person breaks a single one of God's holy, perfect, and just Laws- even one time- even in their thoughts for one milli-second- James said,

James 2:10

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

Now why is that? Because the Apostle John said in **1John 3:4**

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

So sin is being "lawless" or being "without law", or living in *opposition* to God's Law. In other words- sin is defined as any transgression of the Law of God. So all who transgress- even in their

thoughts- are sinners. That is what a sinner is. And that is why Paul said,

Romans 3:20

because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

So, because we cannot keep God's Law- the only thing that God's Law does for us is to show us just how sinful we really are. So the perfect, holy, and just law of God *damns* us- not because there is anything wrong with the Law- there isn't. But God's Law damns us because we cannot keep it perfectly and continuously in thought, word, and deed 24 hours every day and 7 days every week for our entire lives. And that is why Paul said,

... for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

... and, therefore, because that is true:

... by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight...

And sinners are condemned by God and are under the Wrath of God. And, therefore, sinners- those who in any way transgress even a single one of God's Laws- are those who are in desperate need of both Forgiveness and Salvation from God. So Paul's argument here is that even though the Jew was trying very hard to obtain Salvation through the keeping of God's law- in reality- he wasn't succeeding and was no closer to earning Salvation than the Gentile who wasn't even trying- which is why Paul said that the Law of God was put in place so that:

... so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

So the point that Paul is making is that is no distinction between somebody who is working hard to earn their Salvation and those who aren't even trying to earn it at all precisely because nobody *can* earn Salvation by what they do for themselves. And we need to know that this is not an issue of people putting forth more effort or of trying

harder. It is simply beyond the capacity of human beings to live on this earth and in this body without sin in some capacity. So Salvation is not hard, and it isn't difficult- no, Jesus said,

Matthew 19:26b

... **With people this [Salvation] is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**

And because that is irrefutably true for every single human being on planet earth- we should then agree with Paul and say,

... **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Now that would be bad enough- but our problem doesn't stop there. The frightening reality about us being sinners doesn't end simply with us admitting the obvious- that we are, in fact, sinners- like somebody that got caught doing something that he said he isn't guilty of and going through a sort of embarrassed silence. No, the issue of us being sinners is far more dangerous and far more frightening and it goes much further than us simply admitting that we are not perfect because God the Holy Spirit spoke through David and said,

Psalms 7:11

God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.

Now the word that was translated into English here as **“indignation”** comes from the Hebrew word that means: *The wrath and anger that comes from being insulted and offended.*

So because God is a Righteous Judge- He is offended and insulted by our sin. In other words- the Holy Bible teaches that God is angry and He exercises Divine and Holy Wrath against those who transgress even a single Law.

So not only are we now guilty of being sinners- we have also insulted the Owner and the Creator of the Universe by our transgression of His Holy Law, and, therefore- God's Wrath is now bearing down on us like a freight train at 300 miles an hour and we are chained to the railroad tracks.

In other words- God's Justice *demands* that He execute Eternal Damnation- eternal Death- against all who sin- which we have discovered is every single human being on earth- and we are entirely helpless and hopeless to change our situation by and through *anything* that we do for ourselves.

And so we need to be "saved" from this. We need to be "delivered" from this horrific Damnation. We need to be "rescued" from this Eternal Death. We need to be "healed" from this terrible plight. And we need to be "brought out from under" the Wrath of God. In other words- we need to be saved from God. But *how* are we saved?

Are we saved by suddenly trying harder to please God? Do we double up on our efforts to obey God's Law? Paul says, "No". Because if that were true- do we really think that by pleasing God *half the time* that He will look the other way and cut us some slack? Or do we really think that by pleasing God $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time- we can be rescued from Divine Wrath? Or do we really think that by obeying God's Law 10% of the time- God will not notice the other 90%? Or, do we really think that by being a nice person on alternate Tuesdays- if it is convenient- and if we have the time and if we are inclined to do so- that we can escape the Damnation of a Holy God on all unrepentant sinners? Do we really think that?

Ever since Adam and Eve fell in the Garden- human beings have been trying to do something to try to earn Salvation, to try to earn God's Favor, to try to divert God's Wrath upon them, to try to escape God's Damnation. Adam and Even sowed figs leaves to hide their nakedness, savages sacrifice their children, barbarians pierce themselves through and bleed to show their great willingness to suffer, pagans go into trances to ward off demon spirits. It is natural and normal for fallen creatures to think that if only they would do something or say something or act on something- then God would see their efforts and their labor and their works and He would see their sincerity and He would see their hearts and He would see their desire, and He would count that effort and that sincerity and that desire and those labors and works as payment to earn Favor and deserve a reprieve from the frightening reality of their sin.

And we call those people who believe and teach such things: Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus and Jews and Taoists, and they are those who follow Confucius and those who follow Mahatma Gandhi and

those who follow Joseph Smith and those who follow Ellen G. White and those who follow Mary Baker Todd Smith Eddy (she had a problem with husbands).

But we don't call them "Christians" and we don't call them "saved" because these people collectively and individually are wrong about the most serious and most vital issue that human beings face- and that is- how lost sinners are saved! And every single one of them are wrong about this! They are *entirely* wrong! They couldn't be *more* wrong! *Everything* they teach and believe about Salvation is completely at odds with the one single Way of Salvation that God established, and they are, in fact, *fighting against* that one single Way by everything they do and everything they teach about how sinners are saved. Only Biblical Christianity teaches the Truth about Salvation and the Apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 3:21&22a

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe...

And, later on- to the saints at the Church in Ephesus- Paul further developed the Gospel when he said:

Ephesians 2:8&9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

And we should understand this Passage to say:

Lost sinners are sovereignly saved by God's unmerited Favor being distributed to all of those who are chosen by God to be saved whereby God graciously *imposes* Himself onto the unworthy sinner to give to him the gift of saving Faith. And the faith that it takes to trust in the finished Work of Jesus Christ is not inherent in the individual, but is the gift of God. And, therefore, Salvation is not the result of any works done by humans to try to earn it- and that is so that no human being can rob God of the Glory that is only due to Him.

Another time Paul also wrote to the dysfunctional Church at Corinth:

1Corinthians 1:26-31

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
29 so that no man may boast before God.
30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31 so that, just as it is written, "*LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.*"

Now I want you to notice three common themes running through the Passages from **Romans 3; Ephesians 2; and 1Corinthians 1:**

1. Sinners are saved by what we believe and trust in
2. We are not saved what we do to earn or deserve it
3. God set it up this way so that no human can take credit for his own Salvation and all Glory goes to God alone

Let's examine each one:

1. Sinners are saved by what we believe and trust in

Romans 3:22, 24&28

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

1Corinthians 1:30a

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus...

2. We are not saved by what we do to earn or deserve it

Romans 3:20, 21& 28

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

1Corinthians 1:27&28

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

3. God set it up this way so that no human can take credit for his own Salvation and all Glory goes to God alone

Romans 3:19

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

Ephesians 2:9

not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1Corinthians 1:29&31

29 so that no man may boast before God.

31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

Now so far- the Biblical formula reads:
We are saved:

- ✓ By Grace *alone*
- ✓ Through Faith *alone*
- ✓ Absent human works

But wait- we still are not finished. We still need the *object* of our faith and trust. In *what* or *who* do we believe? In *what* or *who* do we place our trust? Paul answers that when he wrote:

Romans 3:21, 22, 25&26

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

***This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;**

26 for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

So we are to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ *Personally*, and we are to *trust* that the Work of Jesus on the earth containing:

- ✓ His sinless Life
- ✓ His vicarious (substitutionary) Death
- ✓ His physical Resurrection

... was sufficient to do three things:

- Forgive all of our sins (past, present, and future)
- Rescue (save) us from the Wrath of God

- Impute to us the Righteousness that we need to enter into Heaven

So then Paul wrote how we put this all together:

Romans 10:9&10

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

So we are to trust in the Person of Jesus Christ in that we confess openly with our mouth:

Jesus as Lord (God Almighty in human flesh)

... and we are to believe in our hearts (truthfully trust) that

God has raised Him from the dead

So now the formula is:

We are saved:

- ✓ By Grace alone
- ✓ Through Faith alone
- ✓ In the finished Work of Jesus Christ alone
- ✓ Absent human works

... and that is the Biblical Gospel. And I want you to try to understand how radical this was when it was first introduced. And I want you to try to image the great hardship that the Apostles endured to preach and teach this. And I want you to try to appreciate the exclusivity of this and how at odds with every other religion and human philosophy it is and how out of sorts it is with everything that the Jews understand at that time.

The Biblical Gospel is unique- nothing else in all the world is like it. It runs counter-intuitive to the natural and normal impulse of fallen humanity to try to do something to earn God's Favor, and it confronts and rejects all efforts by every other religion to make people good

enough to deserve Heaven. So the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ stands alone. It is taught *only* in the Christian Church and is believed *only* by Christians.

And upon the death of the Apostle John- near the end of the 1st Century- those who led the Church took it upon themselves to pay attention to the warning of Jude when he said,

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.

The early Church understood what we need to know today- that all heresy, all false teaching, all apostasy attacks one or more of three main issues:

- The Character and Nature of God the Father
- The Nature of Grace
- The Person of Jesus Christ- in both His full Deity and His full Humanity

And so to combat false teaching and maintain the simplicity and purity of the Gospel- the early Church was known by the four things that they emphasized:

The Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So right from the git-go there were four things that defined a true Biblical Church from a false one:

1. Devoting themselves to the Apostle's Teaching
2. Devoting themselves to godly times of fellowship

3. Devoting themselves to the "breaking of bread" (The Lord's Supper/Communion)
4. Devoting themselves to prayer

The Apostles, however, were faithful to warn the Church about the dangers that were coming and how to combat falsehood and defend the Christian Faith when it came:

Paul said:

Galatians 1:8&9

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Peter said:

2Peter 2:1-3

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

3 and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

And John said:

2John 9-11

9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

And during the days immediately after the Age of the Apostles- the Church grew rapidly and in 300 years- Christianity was as far West as Great Britain and as far East as India- with Syria and northern Africa becoming the very center of Christian teaching and thought. Giants of the faith like Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Origen, and Irenaeus dominated the landscape. And they maintained the Biblical Gospel.

Then God raised up an adulterous whoremonger from northern Africa who was to become the greatest thinker and spokesman in Christianity's first 1,000 years and perhaps even the next 1,000 years as well. He is called AuGUSTine in the West, AuguSTINE in the East, but preferred himself to be called Augustinius.

And while he was certainly a man of clay feet- who was an unworthy sinner in desperate need of God's amazing Grace- and was simply wrong about some aspects of which he was guilty of both emphasizing some aspects too much and not emphasizing others enough- Augustine nevertheless was staunch in his defense of the Biblical Gospel of Salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone and was routinely criticized for speaking so much about Grace and not enough about the Sacraments- especially the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper.

As the Romans Empire first divided into East and West and then finally collapsed- Christianity went from being illegal to being state sponsored. And for the first time- the persecuted Religion became the protected and preferred Religion. Individual believers went from being imprisoned to being enthroned, and the affect that politics and money and the ease into which the Church settled brought about a laxity and a laid back attitude that we see so much today in the modern American Church- the attitude that basically says:

"I have no need to press into the things of God. I am full and blessed and happy and secure in my Salvation, and I no longer need to heed the Call to fast, the Call to struggle against worldliness, the Call to not love money, the Call to stay close to Jesus, the Call to have my Treasure in Heaven, the Call to pursue Holiness, or the Call to suffer. I have no need of staying true to the Apostles Doctrine because after all- it really doesn't matter what you believe as long as you love Jesus. I have no need to partake of godly times of fellowship among the saints- I can have fun with my sinful friends out in the world, I have no burden for the Lord's Supper as being

vital to my walk with God, and I see no reason to interrupt my plans to gather together to pray.”

And the result of this laid back attitude was a *warping* of Christianity- where effectual and fervent prayer and Bible Study and Fellowship and studying and learning the Apostle's Doctrine was replaced with more and more emphasis on the Lord's Supper. And as political considerations took precedent over spiritual and Biblical considerations- the Church began to lose sight of the Grace of God and began to invent and introduce strange man-made doctrines that were *associated* with Salvation but had nothing to do with Grace- like baptizing babies to remove Original Sin and of emphasizing some strange bird called "Sacerdotal Regeneration", which basically meant that Salvation was obtained through our participation of the Sacraments and not by Grace through Faith alone. So the leaders of the Church began to muddy the waters and obfuscate the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel. So after 1500 years- the Christian Church did the very same thing that the Jews had done in the beginning and began to teach that lost sinners are saved by what they do rather than what they believe. And Jesus had warned us not to be like that when He said:

The Revelation 3:15-19

15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

So as years turned into decades and as decades turned into centuries- the Church became more influential *politically*, but less

influential with Heaven. And as Christianity continued to spread- it became involved in more and more of the affairs of *this* life while becoming very lax about serious *eternal* issues. And the result was that several *secondary* issues took center stage and began to erode both the impact and the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel and the purity and integrity of the Leaders. They had forgotten the exhortation of the Apostle Paul who said,

1Timothy 4:16

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

One of the most egregious sins began at first as nothing more than an administrative tool to assure order when the leaders of the Church gathered together. *Somebody* had to lead the meetings and at first they rotated the task among themselves. But soon the task fell exclusively to the "Bishop of Rome" where the informal unofficial role of "Bishop" was like what we would call "Senior Pastor" today.

But as worldliness and sin and corruption continued to thrive- the leaders of the Church became less and less immune to the sins that power and money and prestige and position bring to any human being. And while during the first 1500 years- there were many, many, many real and genuine and godly and humble and Biblical men who led the Church and who preached the Truth and who called the Church to repent and who resisted and rebelled against the laxity and the wickedness and the unbiblical practices and teaching that were going on- they were usually drowned out by the large behemoth that the Church had become.

So the Bishop of Rome became "the pope", and the pope left off being "the first among equals" and became "the vicar of Christ". And so what began as an administrative tool to conduct meetings became "the visible and tangible representation of Jesus Christ on the earth". And as his office and prominence and stature grew- more and more unbiblical practices were added to those which were already entrenched, and more and more unbiblical teachings were added to those already being taught until the leaders of the Church created a monster who eventually became "infallible" and who became "absolute"

and who could set in or depose kings at will, and someone who commanded his own army, and someone who *created* Church Doctrine out of thin air, and someone who manipulated people and who owned great tracks of land. And the Latin statement that best summed all this up was:

“Roma locuta causa finita”- Rome has spoken, the matter is settled.

The Christian Church became wealthy and powerful beyond anybody's imagination. And the leaders of the Church- while outwardly taking a vow of poverty- were more powerful than kings and even entire nations. The positions of leadership within the Church up to and including the papacy went on the auction block to be given to the highest bidder. And so the injury of hiding the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel under mountains of false and man-made teachings was added to the insult of bought and paid-for positions along with the glitter of gold and jewels and multi-colored ecclesiastical garments with idols and religious trinkets- too many to count- taking the place of Divine Truth. And as Jude warned- power and prestige corrupted the Church with great and pervasive sins of scandalous sexual immorality and financial scams that would make a street vender blush. Yet there was nowhere to turn- because after all- there was only Christ's Church and no other.

The average man and woman and child had no options, no alternatives- they went to the Church and they obeyed the leaders or else they were damned and cast out. And in its filth and sewage- the Church grew even *more* wealthy and even *more* powerful- as a hideous spiritual darkness descended over its worldly glitter and gold. Truly these were dark, dark days.

And the culmination of this corruption was the building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome- which was built on the back of teaching the poor, illiterate peasants of Europe that if they would give their money to the Church- their loved one would spring forth from Purgatory to enter into Heaven. So the very symbol today of the power and glory of the Roman religious system is the Basilica that was built on the lie of selling “indulgences”. So now even Salvation itself was for sale.

But God was faithful. Jesus had already promised:

Matthew 16:18

... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

And so out of this filth- God restored purity; out of this worldliness and a love for money and arrogance- God restored godliness and integrity and humility; out of man-made teaching- God restored the beauty and the purity and the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel and a return to Scriptural Authority; out of this spiritual cancer- God restored health, and out of this great and pervasive darkness that had not been seen since the days of the Pharisees- God was faithful to restore Holy and Divine Light.

And so right in the middle of its putrefied stench- God raised up men- men with clay feet, men with the potential to do either great good or great harm, men who were flat out wrong about many things- but men who had been saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone, and men who were gifted by God to see and understand the majesty of Grace and who were determined to cross any river, climb any mountain, face any army, bear any burden, sacrifice all that they had- to call the Church to repentance, and by taking it back to its original roots and to restore godly and holy and pure light to the Church of Jesus Christ.

And they were called "The Reformers" because they wanted to *reform* Christ's Church. They were calling the Church to repentance- not trying to destroy it; they were begging for a return to the Authority of Scripture- not create a new religion; they were leading a Reformation- not a revolt. And they cried out:

"Scriptura locuta causa finita"- Scripture has spoken, the matter is settled.

And they had no idea what God was doing in them and through them. They had no idea what was ahead of them and they had no idea of the treachery and the violence of the opposition or the glory of the victory. They were scared and afraid and they trembled as they stood to confront the single most powerful institution on earth and call it to repentance. But what God did through these men 500 years ago- literally changed the world because the world had never seen such men since the days when Dr. Luke wrote about the Apostles:

The Acts 17:6b

... These men who have upset the world have come here also;

So out of this grotesque spiritual darkness- the glorious brilliance of the Biblical Gospel was restored. Out of a weak and worldly Church- a strong and Biblical one emerged. Out of the horror of false and manmade teachings that emphasized Man and the Sacraments emerged Biblical Truth, Expository Preaching, Doctrinal Precision, and a return to the majesty and the glory of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. And the Latin phrase that signified the Protestant Reformation was:

“Post Tenebras Lux”- Out of Darkness- Light!

... and it holds true today- that after 5 centuries- we have not forgotten, we have not grown weary, we have not become lax, we have not become dull of hearing, we have not lost our protest, and so we refuse to go back into that spiritual darkness because we have seen the Light, and so we loudly and we proudly and we unapologetically proclaim and herald a glorious Gospel- that unworthy and wicked sinners are saved by what they believe in and what they trust in, and not by the religious duties of an apostate religious system or the religious trinkets that they possess or because some man pronounced them “clean”.

So go with me over the next several weeks as we explore each of “The Five Solas” that defined the Protestant Reformation:

- ✓ **Sola Fide**- By Faith Alone
- ✓ **Sola Scriptura**- By Scripture Alone
- ✓ **Sola Gratia**- By Grace Alone
- ✓ **Solus Christus**- By Christ Alone
- ✓ **Soli Deo Gloria**- to the Glory of God Alone

... and then you will understand why we must be:

Semper Reformanda- Always Reforming.

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.