

The Importance of the Reformation Scriptures

Introduction:

This week, many in our culture will participate in one of the strangest Holidays we have known. Many will dress up in all types of costumes, from devils, monsters, superheroes, and all kinds of other creatures to celebrate what we call Halloween. It is one of the oldest celebrations we have and has its roots in the middle ages when many in the Catholic church believed that on the night before All Saints Day, Or All hollowed Eve that dressing up as devils and demons they would ward off the Devil and his advances since he would be offended at such a representation of himself, and since they believed his weakness was pride

Ironically, the celebration and recognition of the Reformation takes place at this same time. One of the greatest Moves of God for the church to return to the truth of the Gospel happens to be the same time that people would dress up and mock the devil. The reason for this is

that the Reformation began 496 years ago on October 31 1517

That was the occasion that Martin Luther posted his 95 Thesis on the church Door of Wittenburg

But to understand what led up to this we need a little history of what was happening in the Catholic Church and the Man Martin Luther

It seems when you look at the earlier years of Martin Luther, He was destined to go thru a person Crisis every 5 years

It was in 1505 that he was coming home for a visit from his studies a law student that he was caught in a violent thunderstorm and a bolt of lightning struck so close to him that it nearly frightened him to death, and he was surprised that he had escaped with his life and he cried out in terror, " Help me saint Anne I will become a monk"

Because of this brush with death, Luther made the impulsive decision to enter the monastery to take holy orders, This was in direct opposition to his Fathers wishes for a lucrative law career

However While in the Monastery, He was a monks monk He was the best at what a monk did. Wholly devoted way beyond what most monks were. But as much as he was committed to the duties of monkary, He was also beaten down and plagued with constant unresolved guilt feelings.

He would would drive the Fathers crazy because he would spend hours in the confessional confessing his sins, sometimes up to 4 hours.

His training in law was transferred to a understanding of the Biblical Law. His Brilliant mind that understood the legality of his position before God often drove him to dispair. He saw Christ as a Judge who only had wrath for the sinner.

On one occasion, he was asked if he loved God. He said "Love God...Sometimes I hate God."

He couldn't find peace, He would go back to his room and remember a sin he did not confess and wonder if at any moment he would be consumed. He would go thru all types self denials self flagellation's to try to bring some since of relief from the agony of his unresolved guilt and lack of peace,

But in 1510, Luther was appointed along with some of his other brothers in the monastery to represent there order in the holy city of Rome

Luther was ecstatic, because at that time the church had a high view of the sacrament of penance, this was considered the 2nd plank of Justification.

You see, in the Catholic church, at birth, you would receive the sacrament of Baptism as an infant and the grace of salvation was conferred on the soul until the time came that you committed a mortal sin, a serious sin. At that time you lost grace. So the Catholic church taught that the sacrament of penance you could again gain the grace of salvation. Hence the second plank of justification of those who had made ship wreck of there souls there were

4 things Penance included

1. Confession
2. Act of Contrition You declare you are sorry

3. Priestly absolution
4. Works of Satisfaction (this is what stirred the Reformation)

this would give merit to the soul before God for Him to restore you back to a state of Grace

One of the greatest Works of Satisfaction was the granting of indulgences. These were given among other things for making a pilgrimage to a church with relics. (bones of Joseph, part of Cross,) Churches and Cathedrals would compete with each other to see who could get the most significant relics.

The greatest pilgrimage was to go to Rome that offered the most indulgences. So when Luther knew he was going to Rome, he was filled with anticipation and excitement of spiritual encouragement. But he writes of his experience in Rome to be one of the most tragic and disillusioning experiences he ever had

It was a time of unbridled corruption of the church and the priesthood, with priests running through mass in a hurried manner and filling their lives with all types of licentious living. Priests were openly engaged in homosexual behavior. Luther, being naive, was crushed by all of this. It was during this trip in 1510 to Rome that Luther began to question whether all this was necessary and true.

and the whole matter of gaining indulgences.

These things began to bother him more and more as he studied and taught the Book of Romans in Wittenburg

One of the things that was a catalyst for the Reformation was something called Simone (refers to the sin of Simon trying to buy the Holy Spirit from Peter in the book of Acts)

Some were selling offices of Bishops and other positions

The church in Rome was in a severe financial crisis to finish building the Saint Peter's Basilica of Rome

One of the guys that was assigned the task of taking the news of selling of indulgences for the remission of sins was a man by the name of Tetzel (everytime a coin in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs)

he would go into the villages and say things like ...

Don't you hear the voices of your dead parents and other relatives crying out, "Have mercy on us, for we suffer great punishment and pain. From this, you could release us with a few alms . . . We have created you, fed you, cared for you and left you our temporal goods. Why do you treat us so cruelly and leave us to suffer in the flames, when it takes only a little to save us?" [Source: Die Reformation in

Augenzeugen Berichten, edited by Helmar Junghaus (Dusseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag, 1967), 44.]“

some indulgences were sold for

1. Robbing a church	2.25
2. Burning a house	2.75
3. Killing a Man	1.75
4. Forgery or Lying	2.00
5. Ravish a Virgin	2.00
6. Striking a Priest	2.75
7. Robbery	3.00
8. Priest could have a mistress	2.25
9. Abortion	1.50
10. Murder parents or Wife	2.50
11. Abolished of all sin	12.00

Luther saw this as the scam of all scams

So it was on Oct 31 1517, Luther took his paper containing the 95 theses, some tacks and a hammer and nailed them on the door of the church. This was a common practice, when questions arose and the need for debate was offered. It was customary to use the church door and the University Bulletin Board. Luther wrote the Thesis in Latin, thereby indicating that his was not for the common people but for the scholars, Luther was not interested in making this all public. If

fact it was some students of his that took that paper with out his permission and took it to the newly invented Guttenburg Press and ran off 1000s of copies that they had translated into German and within 2 weeks all of Germany had in hand the 95 thesis

Today the light of the Reformation has been significantly dimmed. The consequence is that the word "evangelical" has become so inclusive as to have lost its meaning. We face the peril of losing the unity it has taken centuries to achieve. Because of this crisis and because of our love of Christ, his gospel and his church, we endeavor to assert anew our commitment to the central truths of the Reformation and of historic evangelicalism. These truths we affirm not because of their role in our traditions, but because we believe that they are central to the Bible.

- I. **Sola Scriptura: Our Only Manuel**
- II. **Solus Christus: Our Only Method**
- III. **Sola Gratia: Our Only Method**
- IV. **Sola Fide: Our Only Means**
- V. **Soli Deo Gloria: Our Only Motivation**

- I. **Sola Scriptura: Our Only Manuel**

The Cambridge Declaration (1996) 

Dr. Michael S. Horton, Dr. R. C. Sproul, Dr. James. M. Boice

Sola Scriptura: The Erosion of Authority

Scripture alone is the inerrant rule of the church's life, but the evangelical church today has separated Scripture from its authoritative function. In practice, the church is guided, far too often, by the culture. Therapeutic technique, marketing strategies, and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about what the church wants, how it functions and what it offers, than does the Word of God. Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship, including the doctrinal content of the music. As biblical authority has been abandoned in practice, as its truths have faded from Christian consciousness, and as its doctrines have lost their saliency, the church has been increasingly emptied of its integrity, moral authority and direction.

Rather than adapting Christian faith to satisfy the felt needs of consumers, we must proclaim the law as the only measure of true righteousness and the gospel as the only announcement of saving truth. Biblical truth is indispensable to the church's understanding, nurture and discipline.

Scripture must take us beyond our perceived needs to our real needs and liberate us from seeing ourselves through the seductive images, cliché's, promises. and priorities of mass culture. It is only in the light of God's truth that we understand ourselves aright and see God's provision for our need. The Bible, therefore, must be taught and

preached in the church. Sermons must be expositions of the Bible and its teachings, not expressions of the preachers opinions or the ideas of the age. We must settle for nothing less than what God has given.

The work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience cannot be disengaged from Scripture. The Spirit does not speak in ways that are independent of Scripture. Apart from Scripture

we would never have known of God's grace in Christ. The biblical Word, rather than spiritual experience, is the test of truth.

Jude ³

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

II Tim 3:16

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work

Psm 19:7-11

- The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul;
- The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple;
- ⁸ The statutes of the Lord *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
- The commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
- ⁹ The fear of the Lord *is* clean, enduring forever;
- The judgments of the Lord *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰ More to be desired *are they* than gold,
- Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there is* great reward.

2 Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

Psm 119:97

Oh, how I love Your law!

It *is* my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my
enemies;

For they *are* ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients,
Because I keep Your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
That I may keep Your word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from Your judgments,
For You Yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.

Thesis One: Sola Scriptura

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

The doctrine that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority was the "Formal Principle" of the Reformation. **In 1521 at the historic interrogation of Luther at the Diet of Worms, he declared his conscience to be captive to the Word of God saying,**

"Unless I am overcome with testimonies from Scripture or with evident reasons -- for I believe neither the Pope nor the Councils, since they have often erred and contradicted one another -- I am overcome by the Scripture texts which I have adduced, and my conscience is bound by God's Word."

Similarly, the Belgic Confession stated, "We believe that [the] holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein...Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures nor ought we to consider custom or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God... Therefore, we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule" (VII).

II. Solus Christus: Our Only Method

Solus Christus: The Erosion of Christ-Centered Faith

As evangelical faith becomes secularized, its interests have been blurred with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism, and a substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, feeling for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and his cross have moved from the center of our vision.

The Reformation called the church back to faith in Christ as the sole mediator between God and man.

While the Roman church held that "there is a purgatory and that the souls there detained are helped by the intercessions of the faithful" and that "Saints are to be venerated and invoked;" "that their relics are to be venerated" --

the reformers taught that salvation was by Christ's work alone.

As John Calvin said in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "Christ stepped in, took the punishment upon himself and bore the judgment due to sinners. With his own blood he expiated the sins which made them enemies of God and thereby satisfied him...we look to Christ **alone** for divine favour and fatherly love!"

This is also known as the exclusivity of Christ. He alone Saves, He alone atones, He alone is the way to heaven

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God

Eph 2:18

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Heb 7:25

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.Christ

John 3:16-18

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

"We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

We deny that the gospel is preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

III. **Sola Gratia: Our Only Method**

Sola Gratia: The Erosion of The Gospel

Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature. This false confidence now fills the evangelical world; from the self-esteem gospel, to the health and wealth gospel, from those who have transformed the gospel into a product to be sold and sinners into consumers who want to buy, to others who treat Christian faith as being true simply because it works. This silences the doctrine of justification regardless of the official commitments of our churches.

God's grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of cooperating with regenerating grace. A central cry of the Reformation was salvation by grace. Though the Roman church taught that Mass is a "sacrifice [which] is truly propitiatory" and that by the Mass "God...grant[s] us grace and the gift of penitence, remits our faults and even our

enormous sins" -- the reformers returned to the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. Our righteous standing before God is imputed to us by grace because of the work of Christ Jesus our Lord. In contrast to the doctrines of self-merit taught by Rome, sola gratia and the accompanying doctrines of grace -- total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, and perseverance of the saints -- were preached by all the reformers throughout the Protestant movement. As the Baptist Confession of 1689 says, "Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified; and did, by the sacrifice of himself in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf;...their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

Thesis Three: Sola Gratia

We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

As the Scripture says,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. (Ephesians 1:3-8)

IV. Sola Fide: Our Only Means

Sola Fide: The Erosion of The Chief Article

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. This is the article by which the church stands or falls. Today this article is often ignored, distorted or sometimes even denied by leaders, scholars and pastors who claim to be evangelical. Although fallen human nature has always recoiled from recognizing its need for Christ's imputed righteousness, modernity greatly fuels the fires of this discontent with the biblical Gospel. We have allowed this discontent to dictate the nature of our ministry and what it is we are preaching.

Many in the church growth movement believe that sociological understanding of those in the pew is as important to the success of the gospel as is the biblical truth which is proclaimed. As a result, theological convictions are frequently divorced from the work of the ministry. The marketing orientation in many churches

takes this even further, erasing the distinction between the biblical Word and the world, robbing Christ's cross of its offense, and reducing Christian faith to the principles and methods which bring success to secular corporations. While the theology of the cross may be believed, these movements are actually emptying it of its meaning. There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to him our sin and imputed to us his righteousness. Because he bore our judgment, we now walk in his grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach him.

Thesis Four: Sola Fide

We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

The "Material Principle" of the Reformation was justification by faith alone. As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Faith, thus receiving and

resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." The Genevan Confession likewise pointed out the necessity of those justified living by faith saying, "We confess that the entrance which we have to the great treasures and riches of the goodness of God that is vouchsafed us is by faith; inasmuch as, in certain confidence and assurance of heart, we believe in the promises of the gospel, and receive Jesus Christ as he is offered to us by the Father and described to us by the Word of God (Genevan 11).

As the Scripture says,

*Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, **"The righteous man shall live by faith."** (Galatians 3:6-11)*

V. Soli Deo Gloria: Our Only Motivation

Soli Deo Gloria: The Erosion of God-Centered Worship

Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing his work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a

result, God, Christ and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.

God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship; we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success.

Thesis Five: Soli Deo Gloria

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

The Reformation reclaimed the Scriptural teaching of the sovereignty of God over every aspect of the believer's life. All of life is to be lived to the glory of God. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." This great and all-consuming purpose was emphasized by those in the 16th and 17th Centuries who sought to reform the church according to the Word of God. In contrast to the monastic division of life into sacred versus secular perpetuated by Roman Church, the reformers saw **all of life** to be lived under the Lordship of Christ. Every activity of the Christian is to be sanctified unto the glory of God.

As the Scripture says,

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God; Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God;

*whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. 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. 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. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.** (1CO 10:31; 1PE 4:11; REV 1:6; 2PE 3:1; EPH 3:21; REV 7:12; ROM 11:36)*

Call To Repentance And Reformation

The faithfulness of the evangelical church in the past contrasts sharply with its unfaithfulness in the present. Earlier in this century, evangelical churches sustained a remarkable missionary endeavor, and built many religious institutions to serve the cause of biblical truth and Christ's kingdom. That was a time when Christian behavior and expectations were markedly different from those in the culture. Today they often are not. The evangelical world today is losing its biblical fidelity, moral compass and missionary zeal.

We repent of our worldliness. We have been influenced by the "gospels" of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure adequately to tell others about God's saving work in Jesus Christ.

We also earnestly call back erring professing evangelicals who have deviated from God's Word in the matters discussed in this Declaration. This includes those who declare that there is hope of eternal life apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, who claim that those who reject Christ in this life will be annihilated rather than endure the just judgment of God through eternal suffering, or who claim that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are one in Jesus Christ even where the biblical doctrine of justification is not believed.

The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals asks all Christians to give consideration to implementing this Declaration in the church's worship, ministry, policies, life and evangelism. For Christ's sake. Amen.