

I. God Alone Brings About True Reformation (vv 1-12).

- A.** Reformation seeks unity through confession and worship within the Visible Church (v 1).
 - 1) In spiritual decline, the Church is ridden with divisions due to false teachings, immorality, and sectarianism (Jdg 19-21).
 - 2) But in reformation, as we see here, there is a putting away of old enmity and rivalry because of repentance and confession (Mt 5:23-24)
- B.** Reformation looks to the Word of God (v 5).
 - 1) The world would have us look to all manners of idols and false authorities
 - 2) We look to God and His Word as the infallible rule of faith and life! (Psa 119:43-45)
- C.** Reformation looks to the grace of God (vv 6b-9; Lk 7:44-47)
- D.** The natural man and apostatizing churches scorn reformation (v 10).
 - 1) While we are not surprised when those outside the Church, like Sanballat and Tobiah in the days of Nehemiah, hate the Church and its strengthening, how sad it is when this mindset is found within the walls of Jerusalem, as it was in the days of Hezekiah.
 - 2) Common reasons for not repenting and answering those objections: (a) 'This will just cause division'; (b) 'This is how we have always done it, or we've never done it that way' (v 26b); (c) 'You need to be more gracious!'.
- E.** God is still gracious to humble some to repentance, though others scorn His Word (v 11; Acts 17:23-24)
- F.** It is God alone who gives this grace to personally repent and for the Church to be reformed (v 12; Eph 2:8-10).

II. We Need Christ our Mediator to Perfect Our Praise Before God (vv 13-20).

- A.** We are to be as obedient to the Lord as we can.
 - 1) In our positive obedience to the Lord (v 13).
 - 2) In not tolerating sin, but putting it to death (v 14; Jer 2:13)
- B.** We need Christ Jesus for our salvation. (v 15a)
 - 1) The sacrifices point us to Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Psa 49:7-9).
 - 2) We are all in need of salvation for our sins.
- C.** Consider our own imperfections in worship:
 - 1) A lack of preparation for worship (vv 3, 15b; Lev 23:5; 1 Cor 11:28)
 - 2) A lack of attentiveness in worship (vv 17a, 18a)
- D.** We need Christ's perfect mediation (v 17b, 18b-19; Isa 64:6; Heb 2:11-12; Psa 31:19).
- E.** Here we have the assurance of pardon and grace (Psa 32:1-2; Psa 1-3:2-4).

III. The Great Effect of Reformation Is Joy (vv 21-27).

- A.** We are gladdened in and by public worship (v 21; Psa 122:1, 104:15).
- B.** Christ encourages those who minister and to whom are ministered the Word (v 22a).
 - 1) Knowledge of the Lord is good (1 Cor 8:1; Isa 40:9; *Larger Catechism* 7).
 - 2) Do you meditate upon and pray in adoration of God's attributes? Do you read the Scriptures theologically, not just for application?
- C.** Our fellowship and peace together is a reflection of our peace with the Lord (vv 19, 22).
- D.** Diligent use of the means of grace leads to further desire for the Lord (v 24; Gen 1:21, 24; Psa 63:1-2).
- E.** Reformation brings joy (vv 25-26).
 - 1) So it was also in the days of reformation during the life of Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh 8:10).
 - 2) Is your life characterized by the joy of the Lord?
- F.** We truly receive the Lord's blessing in reformation and worship (v 27; Zeph 3:17; 2 Cor 13:14).