

ECHOES OF THE REFORMATION: Five Truths that Shape the Christian Life

Session 1: Why the Reformation Matters

On October 31st, we will celebrate the 500 year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Almost 500 years ago, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther's theses called for the reform of the church and served as the catalyst for the Protestant Reformation. The core issue behind the Reformation was authority. What or who will be the authority of the church? Of Luther's 95 affirmations and concerns, the main point was simple: you can't buy or earn God's grace, and you can't override the authority of the Bible.

Luther, by God's grace and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, rediscovered the fact that salvation comes to a person by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and good works result from our faith, they are not added to it as the grounds for our right standing in the Lord's eyes ([Eph. 2:8-10](#)).

Justification, God's declaration that we are not guilty, forgiven of sin, and righteous in His sight comes because through our faith alone the Father imputes, or reckons to our account, the perfect righteousness of Christ ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).

The Reformation, from Luther's perspective, was nothing less than the recovering or recapturing of the gospel itself.

VIDEO NOTES:

WHY STUDY THE REFORMATION?

1. It's our _____, and _____ matters.
2. It's God's _____. The Reformation gets to the core of what Christianity is all about.
3. We face similar _____ today.

"As political pressure mounts, morality drifts with today's culture, and evangelicalism becomes more and more refined in a post-Christian world, it's even more important to hold the convictions of the great Reformation closer than ever. We stand on the shoulders of Christians in the past, and knowing where we came from will help us keep moving forward with passion and biblical clarity."

ROMAN CATHOLIC TERMS DEFINED:

The Council of Trent: met off and on from 1545 through 1563 to articulate the Roman Catholic Church's answer to the problems that triggered the Reformation. This council defined Rome's view of justification.

Infusion: pouring into the soul, of the righteousness of Christ

Sacrament: a religious ceremony or act of the Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace, in particular. In the Roman Catholic and many Orthodox Churches: the rites of baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, ordination, and matrimony.

Penance: a punishment undergone in token of penitence for sin; a penitential discipline imposed by church authority; a sacrament, as in the Roman Catholic Church, consisting in a confession of sin, made with sorrow and with the intention of amendment, followed by the forgiveness of the sin.

Venial Sin: (in Roman Catholicism) a relatively slight sin that does not entail damnation of the soul.

Mortal Sin: a gravely wrongful act, which can lead to eternal damnation if a person is not absolved of the sin before death. A sin is considered to be "mortal" when its quality is such that it leads to a separation of that person from God's saving grace.

Purgatory: a state after death according to Roman Catholic belief in which the souls of people who die are made pure through suffering before going to heaven; a place or state of suffering.

Indulgence: a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins; a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. The recipient of an indulgence must perform an action to receive it.

Treasury of Merit: the superabundant satisfaction of Christ for human sins and the excess of merit of the saints which according to Roman Catholic theology is effective for salvation of others and is available for dispensation through indulgences.

ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF JUSTIFICATION:

The Roman Catholic system of salvation is called *Sacerdotalism*, which means salvation comes through the administration of the church and the priesthood.

In the Roman Catholic view of justification, sanctification precedes justification. They believe a person must cleanse himself, becoming inherently righteous, in order to become worthy of justification.

Rome has *a* gospel but not *the* gospel. In reality, their gospel damns not saves because it explicitly denies that justification comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

- To the work of Christ, ROME adds the work of _____.
- To the intercession of the Savior, ROME adds the intercession of the _____.
- To the authority of the Bible, ROME adds the authority of _____ and _____.
- To the free gift of salvation, ROME adds the necessity of _____ _____.
- In place of the finished work of Christ on the cross, ROME demands the ongoing sacrifice of the _____.
- In place of the permanent imputation of Christ's righteousness, ROME substitutes the temporary infusion of _____.

PROTESTANT VIEW OF JUSTIFICATION:

In Protestant view of Justification, we are justified by putting our faith in Christ, and then sanctification follows. Romans teaches that God declares us righteous as we put our faith in Christ, and then He sanctifies us into the image of Christ.

Romans 5:10-11 (ESV): *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Many of the doctrines that we Protestants take for granted find their crystallized expression in the thought of the Reformers. We stand on the shoulders of Christians in the past, and knowing where we came from will help us keep moving forward on the mission to which God has called us.

This study will examine the five core truths that came from the Reformation, now referred to as the "solas." In Latin, "sola" means "alone" or "only." These "solas" teach that justification comes by:

- _____ **ALONE (SOLA SCRIPTURA)**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. - 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

It's not Scripture plus the pope, nor is it Scripture plus anything else. Scripture alone is all we need to learn about God and teach others about God.

- _____ **ALONE** (SOLA GRATIA)

Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. - ROMANS 6:14

Grace is most easily defined as "unmerited favor." God gives grace because He's loving and merciful, not because we deserve it. It's free. We're saved by grace alone.

The Roman Catholic Church couldn't sell grace, and Luther knew this.

- _____ **ALONE** (SOLA FIDE)

By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. - EPHESIANS 2:8-9

We're justified—declared to be right with God—through faith alone.

- _____ **ALONE** (SOLUS CHRISTUS)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - JOHN 14:6

There's no Christianity without Christ. Luther saw the Roman Catholic Church abusing its power, taking Christianity away from Christ.

- For the _____ **ALONE** (SOLI DEO GLORIA)

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* - PSALM 19:1

God doesn't get all the glory if people play any part in salvation. And the Roman Catholic Church insists that works are an essential part of salvation, not just an outflow from it. Luther rightly fought against this thinking.

AFTERMATH OF THE REFORMATION:

Martin Luther appeared on trial in 1521 at the Diet of Worms. Worms was a town in Germany, and a diet was an assembly held by the leaders of the Holy Roman Empire. At Worms Luther was asked to defend himself. His response summed up the spirit of the Reformation:

"I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience."

The Diet of Worms reached a decision declaring that Luther was a heretic and that no one should follow his teachings. Unfortunately for the Roman Catholic Church—but fortunately for us—his influence couldn't be suppressed. The Reformation had begun.

Luther wanted people to have freedom to worship God as He's revealed in Scripture and to understand salvation through Christ alone. The Reformation didn't end when Martin Luther died in 1546. Its impact is still felt today. Most obviously, if you're a Protestant (that is, not Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox), you're a product of the Reformation.