

A Reformation Primer



On the 500th Anniversary (A 7 Week Devotional Study) Glory to God Alone

By Dr. J. Ben Sloan

DEDICATED To those who Teach me to reform and be ever reformed according to the Word of God:
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Solo Dei Gloria

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A word about the five solas. These are five theological principles found in each of the Reformers of the Reformation. However, the recognition of these five was made in the 20th century. In (1916) by Theodore Engelder, a Lutheran scholar recognized three: faith alone, grace alone, Scripture alone. Emil Brunner added Soli Deo Gloriam (glory alone to God). Karl Barth added solo Christo as another common theme of the Reformation leaders. Others have added church alone and love alone- but these are clearly secondary ideas that do not distinguish the Protestant from the Roman Catholic church. Others still have added the “Priesthood of all Believers.”

The Reformation radically changed the church. The Roman Catholic reaction at the Council of Trent took some of these reforms to heart. Vatican I and Vatican II especially opened the doors for mutual respect of Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. The Roman Catholic church (until Vatican I) discouraged the reading of the scriptures in the vulgar language and the Mass was primarily in Latin and not understood by most. Vatican II recognized some validity in Protestant churches.

This study is not just about the past, it is perhaps more relevant than ever in our Post-modern, Post-Christian, Post-truth world. Many are denying any idea of truth or thoughts of holy living. In a pluralistic society that values tolerance above most other values to just say the words “alone” appear to be proud or offensive. The claims that “scripture alone is our standard”, “that salvation is of Christ alone”, or that “our good deeds do not save us” rubs many the wrong way. Yet, false hope is no real hope at all. The hope is not that truth doesn’t matter or that what we believe is ambivalent. True north means false directions are not true. While we know we need to be gracious and kind to all does not mean that behavior or holiness is passé. The hope is to always hold love and truth together. The world still needs both.

DAY 1 3/1- The Climate that Made the Reformation “When the time had fully come...” (Galatians 4:4)

In God’s Providence the Reformation came out of an environment of the moral abuse and power of the papacy at the time, division in the church, decay of feudalism (post crusades) and corresponding rise of nationalism, combined with the rise of the universities, the beginning of the printing press and proliferation of scripture. But above all of this it was and is a movement of God’s Spirit. The Reformation does not just change western



thinking, but has vastly changed the world. The Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the rise of science, modern medicine, capitalism and democracy would not have flourished in the West without the Reformation. These are broad and faith statements, that could be filled with caveats and hiccups of steps backwards that came before forward steps. Some of these are quite unintended steps (especially the Enlightenment). In this brief devotional overview, it is not my intent to argue but to make the points that help us understand the Reformation and how it deeply affects our lives today, but especially how we may grow spiritually through thinking of the Reformation and learning from the examples of the Reformers.

[Pictured is Pope Leo X Medici who instigated indulgences to build St Peter’s]

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust that you will raise us up in your timing and your way. Lord, raise your church up again.

Day 2- 3/2 THE MORAL ABUSE AND POWER OF THE PAPACY AT THE TIME

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” (Matthew 20:25,26)

No one could tell the Pope “No.” The Pope was considered the Vicar of Christ who held the keys to the kingdom (and most said to hell). In 1302 The Pope issued a bull (Unam Sanctum) that said the Pope was the supreme head of the church and there is no salvation outside of the church. Some kings had tried to test the power of the Pope but were excommunicated. A classic example is Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, who tried to appoint his own bishops in 1077. The Pope excommunicated Henry which also meant all the people under his rule were excommunicated (and many believed thus going to hell). The people were about to rebel against King Henry. He had to walk to Pope Gregory’s castle and stay outside in the snow three days until he was forgiven. But perhaps the turning point came eight years later when Henry deposed Gregory.

Some of the abuses of the church were a rise in sexual immorality especially among bishops and popes; the selling of indulgences (buying forgiveness by contributing to the church); the immense wealth of the church and clergy (while lifting up poverty); Simony- the idea that a religious post could be bought for money when the priest knew nothing about the faith and did not even live with the people was common. Sacerdotalism- giving the church and its clergy too great a power was too common. The Reformation brought the clergy and pope off the pedestal. People could pray directly to Christ for forgiveness without having to go through a priest. People could read the scriptures in their own language and understand it for the first time.

Prayer: You alone are Lord. To you alone I owe my ultimate allegiance and worship. You are worthy to receive all glory, honor, and praise.

Day 3 3/3- DIVISION IN THE CHURCH AND THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

The king's heart is in the Lord's hands, as the rivers of water are channeled, so he turns it wherever He wants it to go. Proverbs 21:1

It is hard to believe, but for the most part the Trinitarian orthodox church did not divide until 1054. This division was between the Eastern Orthodox and the Latin Roman church was over the authority of the Roman patriarch over the other patriarchs, as well as the idea that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father (In the Nicene Creed), as well as some smaller issues. The Papal Schism (1378-1417) in which there were different popes (three at once) in different locations each with kings to back them up. This showed the growing power of kings over the papacy. Eventually the idea that Henry VIII, previously declared a protector of the faith, could appoint his own archbishop of his country (beginning Anglicanism/Episcopalianism) with his own theology, grew from this. When the church divided once, it was easy to divide again. In our day we take the division of the church too lightly. Schism (both leaving and kicking out) is a serious sin that drives people from faith in Jesus. That the Pope would rather divide the church than give up the idea that he is supreme among bishops shows serious problems.

Prayer: In your providence, Lord, you guide the nations and guide us.

THE RISE OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND PRINTING PRESS

The Lord replied, "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it." Habakkuk 2:2

Calvin's conversion while studying at the University in Paris showed that the universities were open to freer thought- to read Luther, Erasmus and others. Previous scholars such as John Wycliffe (Oxford 1328-1384) and John Tyndale (Oxford and Cambridge 1494-1536) had tried to reform the church and translate the scriptures into the common tongue. Desiderus Erasmus (Rotterdam 1466- 1536) was a scholarly humanist that helped form a more definitive Latin and Greek text of the Bible. The Reformation did not happen despite scholarship, but had some of the best scholars. John Calvin was a Christian humanist scholar and has been called the most brilliant man in Europe at the time, even by his enemies. Zwingli, Bucer, Melancthon were considered humanist scholars.

The Printing Press was invented in Germany in 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg. Luther, who also was a professor of theology, made full use of the press to distribute tracts and scripture. This allowed the people to see what the scriptures say themselves. It was blaringly eye opening.



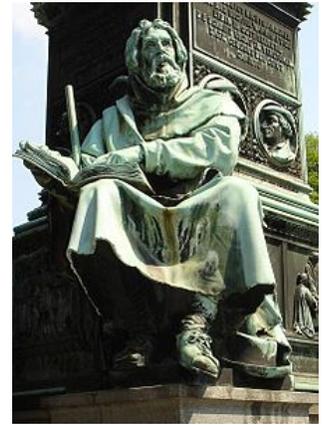
Prayer: Lord, let me love you with my mind as well as my heart, soul, and strength.

Day 4- 3/4 PAVERS OF THE REFORMATION ROAD

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea saying, “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near...Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Mt. 3:1; Lk. 3:8)

The Reformation did not happen in a vacuum. Others had sought to reform the church. Some had sought to reform the church within and others had to leave the church because of threats. Here is a brief list.

Peter Waldo (1140-1205) was a wealthy businessman in Lyons, France. He voluntarily gave up all his wealth in an effort to get closer to Christ. He challenged the church's wealth believing that giving posts to the wealthy was immoral. He also decried the superstitions of the church that certain relics (like bones or possessions of the Saints) would bring healing. He also saw communion and baptism as more commandments (ordinances) than miracles- denying that the cup becomes the physical blood of Christ and the bread becomes the physical body of Christ. He was charged with heresy in 1215 and his followers fled to the valleys and hills of the Alps. Many were killed. But hundreds of years later most joined the Reformed church.



John Wycliffe (Oxford 1328-1384)



John Wycliffe was an English Scholar who translated part of the Bible into the native (vulgar) tongue of the people. Before this the Bible was in Latin and Greek, which most did not know. Wycliffe attacked the joint holding of lands/rule with the bishops. He attacked monasticism for being too wealthy; the idea of Simony (appointing clergy regardless of faith/lack of it and living with the people); and was a proponent of the idea of the invisible church. He died of a stroke at the age of 64. Wycliffe's followers are called Lollards and were condemned as heretics by the Pope. Many Lollards were martyred with the last being Thomas Harding in 1532. Most were absorbed into the English Reformation movement.

John Hus (1369-1417 in Bohemia/Czech) read Wycliffe with interest. He encouraged us to see that the Church is not just the Roman Catholic church but all those who believe and are predestined. He encouraged us to see that Christ is the head of the church, not the Pope. He discouraged the use of indulgences, the paying the church in order to get forgiveness, as wrong. He said, "One pays for confession, for mass, for the sacrament, for



indulgences, for churching a woman, for a blessing, for burials, for funeral services and prayers. The very last penny which an old woman has hidden in her bundle for fear of thieves or robbery will not be saved. The villainous priest will grab it." He wrote many treatises in Czech so that the uneducated priests and people (who did not know Latin) could read them. Hus was lured by a promise of safe conduct by the king to go to Constance to resolve the dissension in the church. There he was declared a heretic and burned at the stake. His followers, the Hussites fought four crusades against them. The Moravian church, which has ties to the Reformed (Presbyterian) church came from this group. Early Scottish Reformers. Patrick Hamilton was killed in 1528. Hamilton studied at the University in Paris and learned Luther there. George Wishart, great friend of John

Knox, was hung and burned in 1546. Both violent deaths at the hand of Cardinal David Beaton, laid the ground work for the Scottish Reformation. At the same time, the immorality of Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic Champion, who had several affairs and was associated with her husband's murder evoked even more consternation with the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland.

Prayer: Thank you God for people who are both creative yet submissive to you. Thank you for those who want your heart and want to peel back the layers of varnish to get to the beautiful heart of the good news.

Marker where Wishart was martyred.



Day 5- 3/5 SOLA SCRIPTURA- SCRIPTURE ALONE-

Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [15](#)and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16](#)All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17](#)so that the servant of God^a may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

Martin Luther at the Worms: "Since your majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason--I do not accept the authority of popes and councils for they have contradicted each other--my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me. Amen."

"a simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it".(Luther)

"The true rule is this: God's Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so." (Luther Smalcaid Articles II.15)

Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for? The more we reject it, the more we become satisfied with men's books and human teachers.(Martin Luther).

John Calvin- "The difference between us and the papists is that they do not think that the church can be 'the pillar of the truth' unless she presides over the word of God. We, on the other hand, assert that it is because she reverently subjects herself to the word of God that the truth is preserved by her and passed on to others by her hands."

"I approve only of those human institutions which are founded upon the authority of God and derived from Scripture." (Calvin)

The problem of the Reformation is the same problem today. In the church, people were making up things in the name of scholarship but sometimes with mixed motives and hidden agendas. One of the breaking points that caused the Reformation was the selling of indulgences in order to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The cathedral was to be (and still is today) the biggest Roman Catholic church building. But it costs a tremendous amount (finished in 1626). The church had no real power to tax. The church taught that the faithful could take part in the cleansing of their own punishment for sin through an indulgence of the church. The church had the power to absolve or forgive sins and relieve the temporal power of sin. Some carried this a step forward and said that if people gave toward the building of a church that it would ease the punishment of their sin in this life or the next. Johan Tetzel a Dominican Friar said, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs." Of course, the problem here is that the rich can be forgiven much while the poor are out of luck. Favoritism and materialism are clear consequences of such thought. Luther and Melanchthon winced at this idea of paying for forgiveness. While The Council of Trent of the Counter Reformation held back such abusive practices; and Vatican I of 1869 restricted it more, the idea of indulgences still reside in the Roman Catholic church.

I was in a conference on the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth and the speaker, who was advocating social change above all else, said it was time to abandon sola scriptura. The audacity on the 500th anniversary to discard the wisdom of the ages- the scriptures and the Reformers in a quest to be relevant and popular! The motto of the Reformation was not "Reformed and Ever Reforming" as some would like to say- but "Reformed and ever Reforming According to the Word of God." The standard is not the pope, or the scholars, or the social engineers of our day- but the scriptures. Disobedience is just that- jettisoning scripture and God's Word to go our own way. I am afraid the Reformed church has destroyed itself as it has abandoned the ability to listen to God's Word and to be gracious and loving toward each other. There are 14 different Presbyterian denominations in the United States alone. The abandonment of scriptures as the only standard means at best it is a watered down (wishy washy) standard, and at worst can be ignored when we disagree with it.

Prayer: Your Word, O Lord is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.



Day 6- 3/6 SOLA SCRIPTURA- THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 4:6- “Do not go beyond what is written.”

What is this idea of Sola Scriptura? It is the idea that God’s Word Alone is our authority for what we believe and what we do.

The Bible is the primary way we hear from God today. It is an ancient book. Because it is ancient it is proven and tested. Calvin’s idea of the authority of scripture was found not in the ancient words themselves, but in the Holy Spirit’s illuminating the words to us. The Holy Spirit inspired the words at the time of their writing- using the author’s language, educational background, writing skills, and context. But the Holy Spirit makes the ancient words come alive- allowing us to believe them, apply them, live by them. There is a danger in denying that the scripture is accurate, or that we should pay any attention to it at all. Such an attitude shows a lack of respect to the Church of the past (both the Biblical church and the church that believed and followed the Bible). There is also danger in trying to make the Bible so wooden that it cannot live and breathe into our situation. The Spirit not only inspires Scripture-- The Spirit inspires us. However, words mean something. The illumination of the Spirit does not contradict the inspiration of the Spirit. In other words the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 4:4), and does not promise one thing and then break the promise. The Spirit does not make one command then later say the opposite is true. Just as the Covenants remain, the promises remain, and the words and basic meanings remain. The words of scripture may have different nuances and emphases as we age, as we face different circumstances, and as the Holy Spirit leads us. Scripture can speak to us with authority unlike any other book. It beckons us, convicts us, comforts us, leads us, encourages us, inspires us. Christians of ages past have affirmed that God speaks to them in scripture. Calvin says that the scriptures are the spectacles through which we can distinctly and clearly understand God.

Prayer: Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Law O Lord.

The Incorrect View

The Church is Determiner of Canon
The Church is Mother of Canon
The Church is Magistrate of Canon
The Church is Regulator of Canon
The Church is Judge of Canon
The Church is Master of Canon

The Correct View

The Church is Discoverer of Canon
The Church is Child of Canon
The Church is Minister of Canon
The Church is Recognizer of Canon
The Church is Witness of Canon
The Church is Servant of Canon

Geisler/Nix

DAY 7 3/7 SOLA SCRIPTURA- THE MAKING OF THE CANON

I am astonished You are turning to different gospel- which is no gospel at all...But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.” (Galatians 1:6,7)

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described by this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city.” (Rev. 22:18-19)

Wasn’t the Canon of Scripture affirmed centuries after it was written? Doesn’t the church (or humans or scholars) therefore give scripture its authority?

This was the argument used against Sola Scriptura by the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic church claims that it picked and chose which books would be part of the Bible and which books would not. In about 140 the heretic Marcion came up with a list of what he thought were canonical books. This spurred the church to affirm what was already attested to by orthodox believers. The Gnostics (Valentinian) too were writing new

gospels (Nag Hammadi texts) that were not accepted by the orthodox church because of clearly contradictory teachings. Montanus (c. 160) tried to add new teachings and books. This encouraged the church to note that the age of the Apostles was over and the canon was closed. The basic test of the book in the New Testament was being written by an apostle or apostolic witness (like Luke or Mark), the unity (not contradiction) of the basic message, and the broad approval of the church (East and West). Luther's test of canonicity was its ability to speak of Christ. Oscar Cullman said, "among the early Christian writings the books which were to form the future canon *forced themselves on the Church by their intrinsic apostolic authority*, as they do still. Because the Kyrios Christ speaks in them."

There have always been those who wanted to add to the canon. We have noted the Gnostics. Modern day Gnostics also want to add Nag Hammadi and other Gospels to the Bible. Just because a book is ancient does not make it scripture. Just because we may think we have good teachings to add to scripture does not mean our authority is from God. Joseph Smith wanted to add the Book of Mormon. The apostolic test keeps many out, but the clear contradiction to the themes in both Old and New Testaments keep others. If the book is history but doesn't add much spirituality (like Maccabees or Thomas) it could be kept out as well.

Calvin has a great answer to the idea that the church approves the Bible (Inst. I.7.2). Paul says that the church is "built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles." (Eph. 2:20). Thus, the scriptures and teachings were there before the church began. The Word of God calls forth the church- not the other way around. The Word gives authority to the Church, not the other way around. God's Spirit inspired the Word whose reading/preaching brings people to Himself. Calvin said, "Thus while the church receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scriptures, it does not thereby render authentic what is otherwise doubtful or controversial." Much is made that the Council of Nicea in 325 and later councils that approved the canon officially. It should be remembered the church could not legally meet together until it was legal. Church gatherings were illegal until Constantine. At Nicea the church from all corners of the world came together to put in writing what it believed and what it was doing. But the Scriptures, were virtually agreed upon before Nicea ever met, but the Church could not come together to say this as it was being persecuted. Calvin also notes that it is the Holy Spirit that gives authority to the Scriptures and unsaved people cannot think rightly about heavenly things. For him the testimony of the Spirit is superior to all rational arguments proving the canonicity or inspiration of Scripture (Inst. I.7.4).

There has been much study on the ancient manuscripts of scripture. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the veracity of the text of the canon we now have with no significant changes.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank you that you not only inspired scripture and illumine it to me. Thank you that you also, in your providence, protect it, unify it, and keep it for us.

DAY 8 3/8/17- SOLA SCRIPTURA- THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

"Understanding your word brings light to the minds of ordinary people" (Psalm 119:130 CEV).

"It seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:3,4)

Cannot we make the scriptures mean whatever we want them to mean? Is the scripture so unclear that we cannot make sense of it? Do we not need the church (or scholars or experts) to interpret scripture for us?

The clarity of scripture is an important part of the Sola Scriptura teaching. While there are always people who call what is red "blue"; or call what is straight "circular;" such interpretations should be seen as misinterpretations by a common idea of truth. But just as the common man could misinterpret scripture, so could a priest. The scripture is not meant to be concealed in some obscure hidden way like a secret message meant to be unlocked. The scripture is the Word of God speaking to us, showing us. It is like a map to God, a compass to Him. It is a lamp to our feet. It is the light that is meant to be shone in order to reveal God and His will for us. Calvin especially sought to see the plain and simple grammatical meaning of scripture. While

Calvin certainly paid attention to scholarly works of his day that illuminated context, he did not concentrate on this but on the clear meaning. In our day there is a feeling among many that only the scholars can understand and interpret scripture. But no scholar can understand it fully. The scriptures are deep enough for the best trained scholar, but shallow enough for a child to understand parts truly and clearly.

Scripture was meant to be put in the language of the people (the vulgar language) so the people can understand it. It was not meant to be hidden in Latin and Greek. Scripture was written originally to a people who could understand it, and we should be able to understand it too. One of the most important things Luther did was translate the Bible into German. The Geneva Bible was one of the first English translations, influenced by Calvin and Knox.

Sermons, for the Reformed, were not meant to be classical Greek oratorical exercises. Sermons were meant to explain the scripture- as it was said of Ezra, "Making the meaning clear" (Neh. 8:8). The allegorical style, even used by Augustine, that saw a hidden meaning in every word, was downplayed. Sermons were in the language of the people for the people to understand and apply to their lives.

Prayer: Lord, give me the ability to see thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, follow Thee more nearly day by day by listening to the clear message of your Word in scripture.

Prayer: Lord, when I do not understand, open my eyes to what you said.

DAY 9 3/9/17- SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE- Sola Scriptura

"You have heard it said...but I say to you." Matthew 5:21,22, 27,28, 31,32, 33,34, 38,39, 43,44

"You search the scriptures... and these are they that testify about me." John 5:39

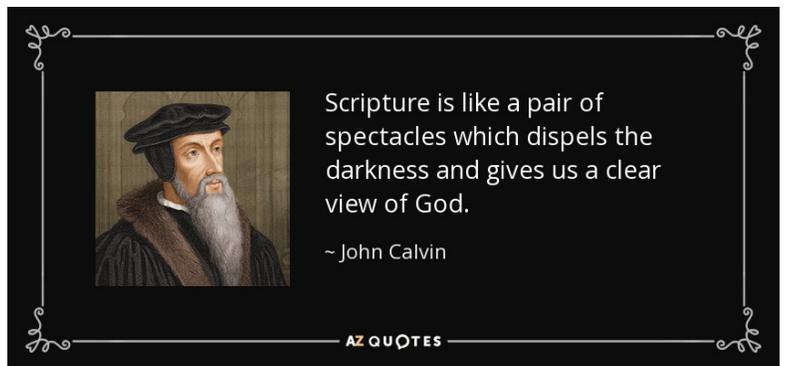
The obscure parts of scripture are to be seen in the greater context of the clearer parts of scripture. John Knox said, "The Word of God is plain in itself. If there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to himself, explains the same more clearly in other places; so that there can remain no doubt."

We do not always need some commentary to

help us. The best Christian books can even distract us from THE book of our faith. Athanasius declared, "The sacred and divinely inspired Scriptures are of themselves sufficient for the exposition of truth."

Other hermeneutical principles (outlined in Bloesch "Holy Scripture" p. 195) are the Gospels must be interpreted by the Epistles. The incidental should be interpreted by the systematic. For example, just because one person spoke in tongues once does not mean it should be a rule that all have to speak in tongues. Bloesch also adds that the Reformers began to speak of the "Freedom of the Word of God." That is while we are bound by scripture, God Himself, while not contradicting what He has said, has freedom to speak more. Luther spoke of the Word being living and active. Barth in the 20th century speaks of God's Word as being the living Christ. While the scripture is sufficient and true in what it tell us about God and our duty to God- the words are means of grace and God is broader than this. Thus the Word is interpreted by the Spirit, but the Spirit does more than just interpret the Word. The Spirit also comforts, consoles, convicts, counsels- sometimes with the Word and sometimes beyond the Word- but never contradicting the truth already given. God is not static. But God is faithful yet living; reliable yet active; trustworthy yet still creative.

Prayer: Living Word, give me grace to read scripture and understand it. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful truths in your Word.



Day 10 3/10/17- THE UNITY OF THE SCRIPTURE

Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he testified of me.” (John 5:46)

There is a supernatural character of the Bible. It is amazing that it has escaped persecution (Greek, Roman, Chinese and more). One of the most expensive books in English ever is the “Cuthbert” printing of the Gospel of John (\$14.3 million). The Guttenberg Bible sold for \$4.9 million in 1987. It is the most translated book in the world by far (636 languages and 3,233 partial translations as of 2016).

One of the amazing things that the eyes of faith see in scripture is its unity. It is a book written over 1400 years with over 40 authors of 66 books. Yet the theme of who God is, who human beings are, and the need for grace and forgiveness runs throughout. There is no book like it. There are other sacred books written by one author (like the Koran by Mohammed, or the Analects by Confucius) that you would expect have a unified theme. There are other books that are written over centuries with diverse views of God (like the Hindu vitas). The idea that God is one is found in both Old and New Testaments; the idea of holiness and that God cares about our behavior and sets forth His will is in both; the idea of love and grace are found throughout. Genesis and Revelation (the first and last books) have similar ideas of God, man, sin, Satan, paradise, and the tree of life. What is introduced in Genesis is accounted for in Revelation. (Ramm).

The Bible is a handbook of our faith. It is the constitution of the church. It is a map to God and to the duty we owe God. The Bible is more than just a history book or a history of a people’s faith from which we can learn. It is a Word for us. Jesus said, “You search the scriptures for in them you think you find eternal life. But the Scripture testifies about me” (John 5:29). The Scripture is our Covenant Book. It is a record but also a promise of how God related, relates, and will relate to His people. The word “diatheke” does not mean “testament” as much as it means “covenant.” It is a promise to relate- “I will be their God and they will be my people.” Both testaments are a covenant to relate in love to God’s people.

There have been over 6 billion Bibles printed, with over 100 million sold or given away each year, and the number is growing. Where is the competitor to the Ten Commandments or to Jesus’ Beatitudes or Lord’s Prayer?

Prayer: Lord, you have in your providence, provided a Word for me. Help me to hear it and apply it to my life.



Guttenburg Bible (1 of 140 copies extant)

DAY 11- 3/11/17- THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE

“All your commands are trustworthy.” (Psalm 119:86)

The Reformers did not use the word “inerrant” but did speak of the “infallibility” of scripture. Zwingli (of the Reformed/Presbyterian persuasion) wrote an important work on “The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God” that used this word. The Westminster Confession also uses the word “infallible” to describe scripture (I.v; I.ix). The scripture is unfailing to us. It does not mislead us, it is a reliable and certain standard for our belief about God and the duty God requires of us. Scripture claims to be “truth” or “true.” (Psalm 19:7-9; 119:86, 138, 142, 144, 151, 160; John 17:17- “Your Word is truth”; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pt. 1:20-21). There obviously are human elements in scripture. God uses the grammar, background, and style of each writer. But just because humans do not tell the truth does not mean that scriptures do not tell the truth. Humans do not have to be false all the time- they may speak truth- especially when they are inspired to do so by the Holy Spirit.

The infallibility the Reformation Leaders taught was one not of impeccability as much as indeceivability (Bloesch). The Spirit accommodated the truth of the Gospel to the mind-set and language of the writers. The Holy Spirit makes the truth really truth to us. Without the eyes of faith, the truth of scripture is irrelevant but also not perceived. Scripture is a trustworthy, enduring, unfailing witness to what God reveals to us.

Zwingli indicated that God will do what He says. He related how when God spoke the action was certain. Thus God spoke and the world began, “Let there be light- and there was light.” Isaac will be born- and he was.



Or in the New Testament- the leper is cleansed according to Jesus’ word, the centurion’s servant is healed, the storm is stilled with a word, “Peace be still.” Zwingli says that “what God promises He will infallibly/certainly perform... His Word can never be destroyed, undone, or resisted.”

Prayer: Lord, may I trust in your promises. May I rely on your Word in scripture. May I doubt all other witnesses before I doubt your witness found in scripture.

DAY 12- 3/12/17 SOLA GRATIA- Salvation by Grace Alone

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.” (Ephesians 1:8)

“For by grace are you saved through faith. Not by works so no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8)

Salvation, this teaching tells us, is not earned by the sinner. It is unmerited favor by God. There are not ten things you can do to earn your way to heaven. We do not initiate our salvation, we do not cooperate with God’s grace, and we do not earn it or deserve it.

When are we saved? Before we were ever born, God made a plan to redeem us. Ephesians tells us that before the creation of the world we were predestined. On the cross Christ saved us- before we could respond. By placing us in a position to hear the Gospel, the grace of God is at work without our cooperation or even our response. Gratita and Gratitude are similar words. We are due to give God credit, glory, and honor and not steal the gratitude for ourselves. We love because He first loved us.

Calvin wrote, “When God elects us, it is not because we are handsome.”

Prayer: Lord, you are deserving of all my thanks and gratitude. Thank you for your love.

DAY 13- 3/13/17 SOLI GRATIA- GRACE IS NOT KARMA|

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. What we reap we also sow.” Galatians 6:7

there is, “...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2)

The idea that we get what we deserve and we reap what we sow are certainly natural ideas. The Hindu idea of Karma- that the bad that you do comes back to haunt you and the good comes back to bless you is very different from the idea of grace. Grace is undeserved favor. Mercy is not punishing us as we deserve; Grace is God’s blessing us when we do not deserve it. Grace and mercy are not fair, but they are a deep relief to those who don’t deserve them. Once a man could not make his house payments. That the bank did not foreclose on him was mercy. That his friend heard about his demise and made his house payment was grace. The ultimate blessing here is salvation.

One of the myths people believe is that we deserve heaven just because we are (and despite what we do). Their reasoning is that it is not fair that God would create anyone who does not go to heaven. But God does not force us to be good and does not force everyone to accept His love. It is obvious that some purposefully choose to reject God and to reject His ways. What is their karma? Should the devil go to heaven? There are some who think that God will continually offer His love until the ones who reject Him break down. Scripture itself does not teach this. Hebrews 9:27 says, “we are destined to die and after this the judgment.” There is a sense in which judgment comes right at our death. So Jesus could tell the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Paul could say “to depart is to be with Christ.” Those who believe that belief and behavior here do not really matter because they will be given a second chance are hoping in a hopeless hope. The idea that we will be reincarnated and that reincarnation (or transmigration of the soul) will give us a second chance downplays that those who are reincarnated or transmigrated do not learn from their mistakes in the previous life. No, there is judgment. This is what we deserve- all of us. But God chooses some out of this judgment to Himself. Before the Reformation the second chance idea evolved into the idea of purgatory. This evolved into a different idea of grace (explained in the next lesson) that could be conferred from one person to the next, and prayers made after death to transport the soul from a state of purgatory to heaven.

Prayer: Thank you Lord, for your salvation and love you offer right here and now.

DAY 14 3/14/17 SOLI GRATIA- BUT WHAT IS GRACE?

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44).

All Christians (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant) believe grace is God’s undeserved favor. It is God’s blessing us when we do not deserve the blessing.

The medieval and Roman Catholic view of grace is very different from the Protestant view of grace. The Roman Catholic view of grace is that grace is infused (not as the Protestant view of imputed or imparted righteousness). For the Medieval Catholic, the prevalent view was that God gives grace that we may live more acceptably. For Protestants, we are accepted despite our sins- from the beginning to the end. For Protestants, grace is given when we have faith (faith alone). For Catholics grace is infused into people through the sacraments (especially baptism and the Mass), through doing good, and directly through God. No one denies that God uses means (tools) to give us grace- like scripture, or fellowship/worship, or prayer.

The Roman Catholic view is grace is received through the church- most commonly by the mass (eucharist/communion), but also through prayers, and good works. Roman Catholics believe Christ has given a treasury of grace to the church through His life and death.

The Reformers rightly believed that we come to God not on our own, but by His grace. He deserves all the credit and glory. We do not glorify ourselves but the Creator who enables us to respond to Him.

Prayer: Your grace is amazing and saves a wretch like me.

DAY 15- 3/15/17 SOLA GRATIA- THE ROLE OF GOOD WORKS

4But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-6)

Late Medieval Teaching (Occam-Biel, Duuns Scotus) taught that doing good prepares us to receive God's grace. "By living up to the highest within him, he could merit the grace of justification." Occam said that "God is committed to give his grace to all who do what is in them." For some Protestants on the far right or far left, this is their view- a semi-Pelagian view that we cooperate with God to receive grace. The Council of Trent affirmed this view in reaction to the Reformers. Bloesch points out that "Luther did not deny that people do on occasion seek and ask for the grace of God." Yet in his view, "this very wishing and asking, seeking or knocking is the gift of provenient grace, not of our eliciting will."

Calvin said, "God does not graciously accept us because he sees our change for the better...he comes into our lives, taking us just as we are out of pure mercy." (CR Calvin 39.139). Kuyper said, "All our running and racing, toiling and slaving, can not create in us a holy disposition. God alone can do that."

Protestantism encouraged doing good- but not in order to be saved or cooperate with our salvation. Luther and Calvin spoke of doing good out of gratitude to God and love for Him, not because we have to do good in order to obtain His favor. Calvin pointed out we do good not as servants who are paid, but as sons out of love.

Why do you even try to be good? There are some who only live by their feelings- or by other's feelings (not trying to hurt others). But people will be hurt. Some are offended when you do good today. Others are offended when you do bad. Truth is, we are God's children (if we believe in Him) and we want to please God above all others.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to do good- not because I have to do it- but because I am grateful toward you.



DAY 16- 3/16/17 SOLA FIDE- FAITH ALONE

"For by grace you have been saved by faith, and this not of yourselves. It is the gift of God so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9).

"A man is justified by faith apart from works of law." (Romans 3:28)

"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification...that works by love." (WCF 13.2)

For Martin Luther, this was the foundational principle of the Reformation. Everything else should be measured against this for him. Faith itself is a gift from God of His grace. Today there is a great deal of boasting. But we cannot and should not boast of saving ourselves.

It is through faith- not through any good acts- not prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, helping the poor, voting properly, establishing a Christian state, not a religious bureaucracy or a religious elite telling us what to do. Faith puts all people on equal footing- no matter what our wealth, education, popularity, faith is what counts. We would do well to note that in our day.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your gift of faith. Help my faith to grow and honor you.

DAY 17- 3/17/17 SOLA FIDE- FAITH AND THE REFORMERS

“The just shall live by faith.” Hab. 2:4; Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38

John Calvin, the primary theological founder of the Presbyterian Church, said that justification by faith alone (sola fide) is “the main hinge on which religion turns.” Calvin said in a piece written for the citizens of Geneva: “For we are said to be justified through faith, not in the sense, however, that we receive within us any righteousness, but because the righteousness of Christ is credited to us, entirely as if it were really ours.” In another quote he said, “Justified is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.” This is one doctrine all the Reformers agreed on.

The early reformed (Presbyterian in theology) thinkers were Zwingli (Zurich), Bucer (Strasburg), and Oecolampadius (Basel). These all followed Luther’s idea of *justification by faith alone*. They were accused by the Lutherans of “wanting the church to be more reformed than even Luther.” John Calvin called Luther the “apostle of the Reformation.” Luther was a scholastic scholar while most of the Reformed thinkers were Christian humanists (following Erasmus). Luther’s scholastic training taught him to take one theme (like justification by faith) and to question everything through that lens. While Luther was quick to criticize the Reformers (using diatribes typical for scholastic thinkers), the Reformed were mild in their critique of Luther. There were various attempts to unite the Reformed and Lutheran churches at the beginning and over the years. In 1988 many Reformed and Lutheran churches around the world recognized each other (“The Formula of Agreement”) and shared communion and ministers with one another. The easy link to both churches is the common Christian beliefs (God, Jesus as human and divine, the trinity, the atoning nature of the cross) and the ideas of Faith alone, Scripture Alone, Grace Alone and Glory to God Alone.

Prayer: Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. Help me to be united to those who believe and follow you.

DAY 18- 3/18/17 FAITH ALONE- WHAT THIS AFFIRMS

Now faith is being confident in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

Thoughts: Faith alone means that faith is important. We should appreciate the gift of faith and to treasure, guard, and nourish that gift.

Faith is tied to hope and love. Faith makes hope real and gives us a goal to live for. Faith is trust that the hope is not a false hope but a real hope. Faith is tied to love. Without trust, love would be shallow. Faith develops deep and true love. Faith in God enables us to love God in response to His love which gives us faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to treasure the faith you give me and to let it grow in me.

DAY 19- 3/19/17 FAITH ALONE- WHAT THIS DENIES

For by grace you are saved through faith and this not of yourselves so that no one can boast. All your righteousness is as filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6

Thoughts: Faith alone means that all good is secondary. It is not that we are good and so God gives us faith. It is not that we do some good and our faith pulls us up making us righteous the rest of the way. It is faith alone-by itself that brings us salvation. If anything was of ourselves we could brag and boast about it. But in heaven we lay our crowns before the throne.

Penance- the idea that we can make up for our bad; doing good deeds to somehow help ourselves or even another in their salvation is somehow wrong. There were some who believed we could pray another into heaven. We cannot pass our faith onto another- it is their faith that saves them. The Latin church criticized this idea saying that this degrades good works so that people will not try to be good. But we do good not because we need to go to heaven, but out of gratitude to God. Luther is purported to have said, we sin in our best deeds as well as our worst. Bad motives affect even the good we do. Calvin said, “The human heart has so many crannies where vanity hides, so many holes where falsehood lurks, is so decked out with deceiving hypocrisy, that it often dupes itself.” (Inst. 3.2.10)

Prayer: Lord, help me to appreciate that any good I do is not of me.

DAY 20- 3/20/17- FAITH ALONE- THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13

Thoughts: The Medieval Roman Catholic Church thought that to be assured of your faith was to rest on your laurels and that this was not healthy spiritually. But both Luther and Calvin spoke of the assurance that comes by the Holy Spirit when we have faith. We do not always have to be in a constant state of doubting and wondering. There is a joy knowing that He is our God and we are His people. This is the covenant statement that is made real by faith. Faith is the key that opens the door to the benefits, joy, and reality of God.



Prayer: Lord thank you for the certainty of faith and the assurance of hope we have in you.

DAY 21- 3/21/17- SOLI DEI GLORIA- GLORY TO GOD ALONE

“So whether you eat or drink of whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel, perhaps the greatest Reformation musicians, wrote on each of their pieces, “Soli Dei Gloria.” This does not mean (as some suppose) simply that our music should praise God. It also means that what we produce, what we work for, what we do in life should glorify God. If you look at the lives of Handel and Bach they were prolific. Their work was not simply motivated by money (though Handel sometimes appears to be the merchant) but their inspiration was purposeful. They lived on- purpose lives- writing music to honor God.

Prayer: May my work, my song, my art, my love, my life honor you and you alone, O Lord.

DAY 22- 3/22/17- SOLI DEI GLORIA- GLORY TO GOD ALONE The Singleness of Glory

“Soli Deo honor et Gloria” (Vulgate translation of 1 Tim. 1:17)- “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever Amen.”



Some translate Soli Dei Gloria as “Glory to the only God.” In some parts of animistic African Religion (and American voodoo) there are many gods who receive growing ranks of glory until the most glory goes to the invisible creator God. In Roman Catholicism and to a lesser degree in eastern orthodoxy there are differing ranks of glory going to saints and especially to Mary. The Second Council of Nicea spoke of three different levels of glory: 1) the latria that glorifies and adores the Trinity; 2) the Hyperdulia that glorifies Mary; 3) the dulia that glorifies the other saints. Ironically when the angel came to Mary to tell her she would have a son you see her tremendous humility and she said, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk. 1:46). The problem is when we start spreading the glory around that we can easily slip (consciously or subconsciously) into praying to, worshiping these other saints as if they were god, demi-gods, or mediators between us and God. But there is only one mediator between us and God (1 Tim. 2:5) and that is Jesus Christ. When we try to take the glory that is due to God and give it to another- it diminishes the honor that is due Him. So the first two commandments say, “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...(Dt. 5:7,8).

Prayer: Help me Lord to give my heart solely to you and to no other. May you alone be my one true Lord.

DAY 23- 3/23/17- SOLI DEI GLORIA- How do we Glorify God?

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isa. 42:8).

While our work may glorify God, and our actions of love may glorify God, and things like prayer and witnessing honor Him, there is one thing we do that is more special still- it is to worship God. We take this for granted. One of the reasons God asked us to keep a Sabbath weekly is that it is good for us to honor God with our time and focus.

When we believe in His redeeming work, we glorify Him. When we trust in Him by faith, relying on His grace, believing in His sacrifice on the cross. When we trust in His reality, His real love- we honor Him. As we continue to grow in our faith- He becomes more and more the center of our lives. He becomes our Lord more and more as we follow in His steps. This glorifies God and reflects positively back to Him- even if no one else sees it.

Prayer: Lord, may my heart, my time, my talent, my giving all reflect your glory.

DAY 24- 3/24/17- SOLI DEI GLORIA- NATURE GLORIFIES GOD-

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the earth proclaims the work of His hands. Psalm 19:1

Calvin believed that the created order display the goodness of the Creator (Selderhuis CH p.274). Nature, he said, is the “theater” of God’s glory, the “mirror” of the providence and power of God, a “witness” to the glory of God and proof of his love toward man (Inst I.5.1,8; I 6.2).

The world along with all humans groan for a day when things will be fair and just- where right wins and is clear. But the problem is that we know if we were treated justly we would be condemned. Yet we long for things to be made right. We long for the heat to not be so hot and the cold to not be so cold. We long for bad things to come out of the shadows. We long for the weak to be made strong, and the captive to be set free, the blind to see and the deaf to hear. Jesus gave us a glimpse of this happening when he came the first time- healing and helping.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes to see your invisible character in nature.

DAY 25- 3/25/17- SOLI DEI GLORIA- THOUGHTS ON GLORY

In the Old Testament, the word “Glory” is Kabod meaning heavy. It tends to imply that someone who receives glory is rich (Gen. 31:1), powerful (Is .8:7), in position (Gen. 45:13). Kabod also carried with it the idea of light emanating from the center of God’s glory- a blinding splendor with flashes of lightning.

In the New Testament the word “Glory” is doxa- from which we get our word “doxology.” It denotes the majesty and holiness of God.

Christ is the manifestation of the divine glory (Heb. 1:3); he is the exact representation (Col. 1). We see the glory of the One and Only in this Word made flesh (John 1:14). Christ purely glorified the Father. He was full of grace and truth. As we imitate Christ- as we love others and do His work we also honor and glorify God.

We glorify God as we reflect His glory in our lives. Jesus is the light of the world- and he calls us “the light of the world.” But our lights are reflectors of His great light. Moses face glowed when he saw the glory of God on the mountain- but it was not Moses’ glory that was reflected- but God’s glory that was glowing on Moses’ face. Any glory we have should point people to the glory of God working in and through us.

In heaven we shall see this glory face to face. We shall be made like Him and enabled to be in the presence of the throne of God- to see the throne described but beyond description in the book of Revelation.

Prayer: Lord, when I am honored, give me grace to point up to you. When I am blessed, help me to remember you are the Blessor.

DAY 26 3/26/17 SOLI DEI GLORIA- THE PLACE OF MARY AND THE SAINTS

“Then the angel said...At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!” (Rev. 19:10,22:9)
“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Mt. 4:10)
“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1 (cf. I Cor. 4:16)

“Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Heb. 12:1)
Thoughts: Part of the confusion and division between the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant churches is the role of Mary and the saints in our worship, prayers, and salvation. There are those who accuse (falsely) that devotion to Mary derives from the very common pagan devotion to Mother earth. However, there are others who have obviously taken this too far. For example forming a later tradition of the immaculate conception of Mary by her parents, and the perpetual virginity of Mary even though Jesus clearly had younger brothers and sisters (and thus not by Joseph from a previous marriage as some conjecture). Some even have her playing a role as a co-redemptor with Christ for our salvation (Cult of the Redemtrix- which is not generally recognized). Some even superstitiously worship the bones or relics of the saints (see Second Helvetic Confession V).

The Second Helvetic Confession (written by Zwingli’s successor in Zurich, Bullinger) says, “At the same time we do not despise the saints or think basely of them. We love them as brothers and also honor them; yet not with any kind of worship but by an honorable opinion of them and just praises of them.” We also imitate them. We probably need to remember the words of the angel to Mary, “Blessed are you among women.” She is the mother of Jesus, and chosen by God for this purpose. Other saints too are to



be imitated as they follow Christ. In scripture, the term “saints” is used many times. It means “sanctified ones”- those who believe and are following our Lord. The term is not limited to the holiest amongst us. But even saints like Abraham, Moses, Peter, and Paul sin and fail. 1 Corinthians 10:11 (in reference to the saints of the Old Testament) says, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us. There are both good and bad found in everyone. It is important to set before us those who follow Christ close that we may not be discouraged in our own journey.

Prayer: Lord, you alone are worthy to receive honor and glory and power and wealth and strength. For you created all things. Help me not to worship or pray or trust in another for my salvation.

DAY 27 -3/27/17 - SOLI DEI GLORIA- TO GLORIFY AND ENJOY HIM

“I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

WSCQ1: “What is the chief end of man?” A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

Translation: “What is the main purpose of human beings?”

Thoughts: The Christian life is not so purposeful that it has no fun. The old saying is, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” We are made to glorify and honor God and find our pleasure in that. I remember the movie, “Chariots of Fire” about Eric Liddell who won the gold in the Olympics. He said, “When I run, I can feel his pleasure.” We can run, skip, jump, play in a way that honors God. Having good, clean fun can honor Him. Calvin talked about sailing on Lake Geneva on Sundays. In fact, if you know you are enjoying your life for God- and not just for yourself- there is even more fun in that! Your work and your chores can also have more meaning if you are doing them to God’s glory but also if you are learning that you may enjoy God’s presence and help in the midst of the work you do. It is not merely an inconvenience. Interruptions can become ways we see God’s providential hand leading us. So whatever you do, know Jesus came to help, to heal, to comfort, to give you life- abundantly. The abundant eternal life does not begin after you die and go to heaven- it begins now.

Prayer: Lord, help me to find you in my life. Help me to find purpose but also joy in my journey.

DAY 28- 3/28/17 SOLUS CHRISTUS

“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” John 14:6

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Mt. 7:13,14

There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 16:25

Thoughts: For some Jesus is only one among many ways, one among many truths. Jesus was not saying, “Follow me and I will lead you to the truth” rather- “I am the truth.” Many do not have a problem adding Jesus to their spirituality- or having Jesus as one god among many. But the “solus” or “only” claim of Jesus is what not only rubs them the wrong way but frustrates them. For them, all roads lead to the mountaintop, however winding. But, despite what post-moderns think, Jesus was saying that truth matters. To say that truth matters means that lying and deceiving is not okay.

At the time of the Reformation (and still today), people were trying to get around the idea that salvation comes through faith in Christ and trust in the cross as a sacrifice for our forgiveness. So the idea of purgatory- that we may somehow pray for others to have their sins burned off in time with punishment; or as some Catholic sects believed- transfer the righteousness of one saint over onto us was followed. Luther and the Reformation leaders called people back to the idea of Christ as our Savior.

Once a baby had jaundice and her parents were told that if they put the baby underneath a special light for so many hours, the baby would get better. But suppose the parents quarreled- “That’s too easy! How about if we

scrub her, warm her, put a little skin coloring on her, and drops in her eyes? If we work hard enough at it, I'm sure we could get her normal coloring back." The doctor would have insisted, No, there's only one way to handle this." If the parents had said, "No, we will just ignore this and maybe it will go away." The doctor would remind them that things can get better if they do not follow his simple but important steps. Believing in Christ is simple but it is also important. Jesus opens the door to belief to whosoever will. It is not exclusive in its invitation it is exclusive in its solution.

Lee Strobel asks, if there were two country clubs- one of which had an exclusive membership for those who earn it and do a multitude of tasks; and the other invited everyone- no matter what they looked like or what they had to join. For the second, entry was not based on qualifications or earning it but on accepting the invitation. Christianity is like the latter. All are invited and we do not earn our way. Rather we depend on one who has paid the way for us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see you are my only and most important savior. Help me to trust in you alone.

DAY 29- 3/29/17- SOLUS CHRISTUS- AND PLURALISM

11And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12**Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12)

Thoughts- E pluribus unum- "Out of many one" is a motto of the United States on the Great Seal. Ironically the official motto of the United States (1956) is "In God we trust." This trust in God can be a uniting thing that brings people of different races and backgrounds- rich and poor together. In our day the 'E pluribus Unum' motto has taken precedent in a kind of reverse. Today we seem so divisive that perhaps a better descriptive motto (that I do not recommend) is "E Unum pluribus" (out of one- many). The sense of oneness is disappearing along with the spiritual and purposeful bonds that once helped us pull in the same moral and spiritual direction. What is missing is a sense of love. The idea of True Love has been derided and confused with lust. We have elevated an ever- hungry but never-satisfying-government into the role of the One who cares for us above all others. Though all religions in America are equally protected, not all are equally useful for the good of the state nor are they all equally valid. For example, some religions do not encourage charity but instead encourage focus on self in order to find inner peace. Arkansas struggled in 2015 as the government put a Ten Commandments statue up. Some Satan worshipers asked to put a statue of the devil up claiming equal treatment and equal validity and were recently (1/25/17) given the green light to move ahead. For some, this is simple fairness- everyone should be on equal grounds. But this goes beyond common sense into the realm of silly moral ineptitude. The solution is not to get rid of all statues- or even all religious monuments. The solution is to begin to make a distinction. Who makes that distinction? The people should be able to make (by vote or by representatives) that distinction. For a Satanic symbol could quickly become an idol and an object for worship for some, and Satanists elevate hate and division over love and unity. There are those who think Christianity is evil- but it is a religion that teaches love. There are some who believe Christianity is judgmental- but Christianity teaches to leave judgment to God and it is the Christians who teach "he who is without sin cast the first stone" and "Judge not lest ye be judged." Yet, having said that, Christianity has always been a believer in truth. God is the ultimate judge of truth. What we believe matters. If we really believe that all religions are alike, would we allow ISIS to have a monument on the statehouse grounds out of fairness? It matters what you believe. There is a difference between those who behead Christians (like ISIS) and those who are beheaded for simply being Christian. It is not wrong to affirm Christ as our model for belief and practice.

Prayer: Lord, let me claim the truth and not be ashamed of it.

Reformers Statue Built into Geneva's wall: Farel, Calvin, Beza, Knox



DAY 30- 3/30/17 CHRIST ALONE- NOT CHRIST AND...

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Thoughts: Late medieval theology (Ockham) had disintegrated into thinking that doing good was so important that it should be rewarded with eternal salvation. One can understand why we should motivate people to do good.

Similarly, late medieval Latin theology talked about forgiveness being earned by penance, by confession, by the Eucharist, by indulgence, and by the transferring of righteousness/grace from one person to another. The problem is that while a priest could say that they absolve someone, that does not mean that the sinner felt forgiven. Luther, when he was a good monk, felt he needed to do more and more to somehow obtain forgiveness for his sins. It was only when Luther realized Christ alone could forgive that he actually realized he



was forgiven and trusted his forgiveness. Protestants could speak of assurance of salvation because of the assurance that they were forgiven by Christ's act (and not their own plus Christ's act). The Roman Catholic church at the time taught that repentance and our actions were necessary for salvation and that we could lose our salvation. While Luther was more vague, Calvin spoke of the doctrine of eternal security and perseverance.

Our salvation does not depend on our actions plus Christ. Our salvation does not depend upon some saint and the cross of Christ. Our salvation does not depend on our taking the Lord's Supper and Christ's cross. It is not doing any law or good that makes us acceptable. Christ's grace shown on the cross and accepted by faith makes us acceptable- and forgiven.

Prayer: Lord, help me to appreciate your love alone and your work for me.

DAY 31- 3/31/17 CHRIST ALONE FORGIVES SINS

No one can forgive sins but God alone...but that you may know the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins, take up your mat and walk.

All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. (Acts 10:43)

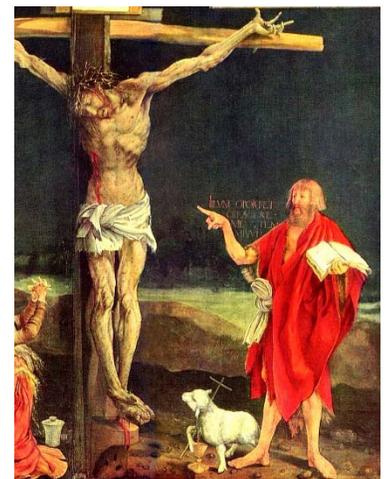
Thoughts: Our hope is not in ourselves and Christ or someone and Christ. We fail ourselves. Others fail us. Christ never failed and never fails. What makes us realize our sins are forgiven as far as the east is from the west is that Christ has paid the price for them. Many do not name "forgiveness" as their problem. Guilt and shame are not perceived in our culture. But alienation from others, depression and loneliness, and purposelessness are aching and nagging problems. But the root of these things is our own selfishness and pride- which are also sins that we must somehow get past. Sadly, we usually cannot name our basic sin, but we can only name the symptoms without naming any kind of real cure. The cure to emptiness, depression, and purposelessness is the hope offered by Christ- and that is the hope of the cross. It is on the cross alone that we can get past our past failures and alienations to move on in life. Forgiveness is not made up for by doing good. For how much good do we need to do? We cannot earn our way to feeling better and being reconciled to God, others, and ourselves. If we could, then we could boast about how good we are. However, Christ gives us a way to pay our debt from outside of ourselves. The Creator who designed things and holds things to account- also made a way to reconcile us to Himself. He Himself has paid the price and bore our sins. To think that we have added to that payment by our own small acts of goodness is demeaning to the majestic cost of the cross.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the forgiveness offered in Christ.

DAY 32- 4/1/17 CHRIST ALONE- THE GREAT SINGLE SACRIFICE

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins... We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. (Hebrews 10:4, 10. 14,18)

Thoughts: The Great Single sacrifice- the one sufficient for all human beings has been offered. The ransom for our captivity to sin has been paid. How can one man's dying pay for all human being's sin? Well, Jesus is not just any man- He is the infinite-worth God- man. Can you compare the value of God's life to ours? Could I compare the lives of a thousand amoebas to my pet dog? I would choose my dog even if it were a billion amoebas! The value of the perfect Jesus- God in the flesh- does not compare to our own value. He is not a lamb paying for human sin- He is God paying an infinite price for a finite amount of sin. For even though we sin a bunch- our sins are limited by death and number. But God's value on Jesus- the Son is infinite. All the Old Testament sacrifices point to the idea that we need a sacrifice- we need to find a way to have forgiveness before the holy God. But they also point to the One true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world- Jesus. Christ alone has this value. To degrade this value by saying we need to add our own sacrifices or merit to it is ridiculous. Christ alone is worthy of our praise- He is the lamb that was slain and He alone is worthy. "You are



worthy...because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation...worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:9,12).

Prayer: Lord, help me to grow in my appreciation of your worthiness.

Grunewald John the Baptist pointing "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

DAY 33- 4/2/17- THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Thoughts: The priest had a large amount of power in the Roman Catholic church of the late medieval period. People were discouraged from reading the Bible. Only the priest was supposed to read (in Latin) and interpret it to the people (though not all priests knew Latin). Priests had the power to withhold the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) and taught that if you did not receive the Eucharist you could not be forgiven. Priests could tell you what to do in terms of penance in order to achieve forgiveness and could absolve sins in the confessional. The priest was the mediator between the people and God.



The leaders of the Reformation fought against the power of the priest when it went against what scripture said. They wanted the Bible in the language of the people- both Luther and Calvin were responsible for translations into German, French, and English. The risk was that people could misinterpret it- but they contended the church too was misinterpreting it. While communion was still closely guarded for the Protestants, it was not used as a personal weapon as it too often was in the late middle ages. For Protestants, Jesus Christ is our great high priest, and he is the mediator between God and man (see below). Luther, quoting I Peter 2:9 says (In the Babylonian Captivity of the Church) "In this way we are all priests. There are indeed priests whom we call ministers. They are chosen among us and do everything in our name." Luther, was not opposed to using the term "priest" and "minister" interchangeably. Calvin renamed the altar that the Lord's Supper was served on "the communion table" as a reminder that the minister does not sacrifice Christ again. We all are called to pray directly to God- we do not have to go through the priest. We need not over-worry about the content of our prayers- the Holy Spirit helps us to pray and helps us to interpret the scriptures. We are the priesthood of believers- in that we are called to bring God to others- to the whole world. As Israel was a witness to God, so all Christians together are an inviting and challenging witness to the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you care about me and desire I know you, read your Word, pray to you, and follow you without hesitation or mediation.

DAY 34- 4/3/17- THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

"Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office. But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:23-25)

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

The idea of *the priesthood of all believers* rests on the idea that Jesus is our permanent high priest. A priest was called to mediate between God and humans: representing God to us and representing us to God. The priest made sacrifices for forgiveness. We do not need to make those sacrifices any more. As Hebrews says (7:27)

“He sacrificed once for all when he offered himself.” As pointed out earlier, we do not sacrifice Christ each time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Christ also intercedes for us- praying for us- and opening up access to God the Father. So when we pray, we pray in Jesus’ name and for His sake (not ours alone). Our prayers go through Jesus- not through a priest and then through Jesus. It appeared that the medieval church seemed to teach that we should be afraid to pray the wrong thing and in the wrong way. So prayers were written out for each Sunday and for every occasion. While these can be an aid, it can be a bit like walking with a cane when we could walk without one- we become dependent and lose our ability (to speak freely from our heart).

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you are the mediator between God and man. Help me to trust in the way you have made.

DAY 35- 4/4/17- REFORMERS TO KNOW- MARTIN LUTHER

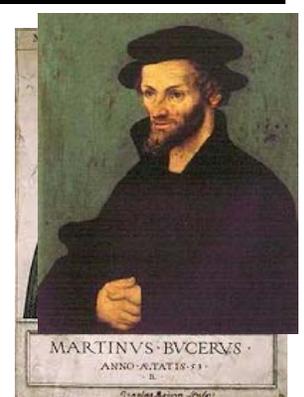
“Who am I, Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?” (1 Chr. 17:16)

Calvin and the Reformed Protestant leaders called Martin Luther “the Apostle of the Reformation.” Most of them had deep respect for Luther, even if Luther disagreed with some of their thinking, because he broke the glass ceiling of sacerdotalism in the church.

Luther was born 11/10/1483 in Eisleben Saxony (Southeast Germany) the son of Hans and Margarete Luther. Hans was a successful miner but wanted his son to be a lawyer and Luther studied to be one earning an MA at the University in Erfurt. In 1505 Luther was caught in a terrible thunderstorm and he cried out, “Save me St. Anne and I will become a monk.” Most think Luther was headed toward the monastery anyway in his efforts to save himself from God’s wrath and hell. At the monastery Luther was constantly doing acts of penance for perceived sins and continually confessing to the abbot in true anxiety for his soul. At 27 he went to Rome for a church conference but came away more disillusioned by the immorality and power he saw. He went to the University in Wittenburg, received his doctorate and became a professor there. 1513-1515 Luther’s thinking changed. He read in Romans, “The just shall live by faith” and realized that salvation did not depend on his actions as much as on putting his faith in what Christ had already done. On October 31, 1517 he nailed his 95 theses to the Wittenburg church door as a means to try to stop indulgences for forgiveness and to reform the church of Rome. In October 1518 Luther was called before Cardinal Cajetan in Augsburg to recant his 95 theses but he did not. Luther was excommunicated in January 1521 for saying that the Pope did not have the exclusive right to interpret scripture. He was summoned before the secular authorities (Emperor Charles V) at the Diet of Worms where he still refused to recant. His famous statement at Worms was “My conscience is captive to the Word of God... Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me, Amen.” On May 8, 1521 Luther’s writings were banned and he was declared a heretic. This made him a condemned man threatened with death. Friends whisked him away to a castle in Wartburg where he spent months translating the Bible into German. In 1522 Luther began organizing the Lutheran church from his followers and with the protection of some German princes. In 1524 a Peasants Rebellion broke out. At first Luther seemed to side with the peasants (his father was considered a peasant), but in the end he saw this rebellion as wrong and encouraged the defeat of the peasants. In 1525 he married Katharina Von Bora and together they had six children. He remained as professor in Wittenburg dying February 18, 1546 at the age of 62. Philip of Hesse called Luther and Zwingli together October 1-4, 1529 to work out an agreement between the Protestant states. The Lutherans and Reformed could agree on 14 of 15 points- but the last one (in what sense Christ is present at the Lord’s Supper) separated them. Initially Luther refused to call the Reformed Christians but later he softened his stance and came up with the Marburg Articles that pointed to the fourteen theological agreements. Luther also believe the body of Christ was ubiquitous (available everywhere) and thus could be present in the elements- whereas reformed thinking spoke of the body of Christ ascended into heaven. Luther got in trouble along with Melancthon and Bucer for advising Philip of Hesse to not divorce his wife but to marry again (using as justification the polygamy of the Old Testament). Luther is often criticized for his attitude toward the Jews and

Muslims. Luther refused to call for a holy war against the Turks, but did encourage a secular war against them. Luther also criticized the Annabaptists for their aversion against all authority, adult baptism and pacifism, and the antinomians who thought the law did not apply to them. Luther was the closest thing to a prophet of the Reformation. Luther was also known for writing many hymns including one we still sing, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." Like David and others in the Old and New Testaments we can learn from his faults as well as his good qualities.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for raising up a Luther. Help us to learn from his mistakes and his boldness.



DAY 36- 4/5/17- REFORMERS TO KNOW- ULRICH ZWINGLI, MARTIN BUCER

“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Isaiah 6:8

Ulrich Zwingli (1/1/1484- 10/11/1531) was a humanist scholar who studied at the University of Vienna and the University of Basel and became a priest. Luther was concerned about his own salvation and studied scripture, while Zwingli was concerned about being a good pastor to his congregation, and studied Erasmus’ translation of the New Testament (Latin and Greek). In 1519 the pope sent a representative to ask that people pay indulgences (paying to relieve sins for the living or the dead) in order to build St. Peter’s in Rome. Zwingli convinced the rulers and the gates were shut not allowing the representative (Sanson) to come into the city. In 1519 he became the pastor of the Grossmunster church in Zurich and began preaching straight through Matthew. This year a plague broke out that killed a fourth of the population. Most were encouraged to leave the city, but Zwingli did not leave his post. Eventually he contracted but survived the plague. In 1522 he began preaching his ideas of reform by breaking the Lenten fast publicly by eating sausages. By October 1523 Zurich had taken all images and statues of the saints out of their churches. Zwingli was a leader of Zurich and was instrumental in forming and breaking alliances among the Swiss Cantons and Philip of Hesse and Strasburg. In 1529 Zurich formed a Christian Civic Union with Bern and Constance (other cities such as Basel joined). Five Swiss Cantons formed the Christian Alliance of Catholic states. A war occurred in which Zurich won and Zwingli pushed for the free preaching of Protestantism there. In 1529 the Marburg Colloquy tried to unite Lutheran and Reformed (Zwinglian) thought. It agreed on fourteen points but disagreed about the sacraments. Zwingli saw baptism and the supper not as sacraments but as an ordinance (command) in which we remember Christ. On October 11, 1531 the five catholic states attacked Zurich which was unprepared and only mustered 3,500 men to face an army twice its size. Zwingli was killed, once again refusing to leave his people. The love he had for Switzerland and for his people made his teachings stick with them. Afterwards Henrich Bullinger succeeded Zwingli. He was able to unite the Protestant Cantons and achieved a relative peace, writing the Second Helvetic Confession which is part of the PCUSA’s Book of Confessions.

Martin Bucer was a humanist scholar who mainly lived in Strasbourg Germany (11/11/1491- 2/28/1551). He originally was a Dominican Friar as well as being a humanist scholar. He met Luther in 1518 and renounced his vows and was excommunicated- fleeing to Strasbourg. Bucer tried to mediate between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg, and later with the Tetrapolitan Confession and Wittenburg Concord (which he helped write with Melanchthon). Bucer took Zwingli’s views about the supper as a memorial, but thought this was a secondary, indifferent matter. He noted that Luther rejected “impanation” (the idea that Christ became the bread), but Luther rejected Bucer’s saying there is no difference. In September 1530 Emperor Charles V declared that all Protestants should join the Catholic Confession or be forced to do so by the military. Melanchthon and Bucer wrote a common nine theses in response to try again to unite the Lutheran and Reformed confessions. Luther met with Bucer and, though he disagreed with him asked him to continue to try to unite. Zwingli neither agreed or disagreed, but Bucer traveled to many different German and Swiss cities pleading for unity. He once said, “If you immediately condemn anyone who doesn't quite believe the same as you do as forsaken by Christ's Spirit, and consider anyone to be the enemy of truth who holds something false to be true, who, pray tell, can you still consider a brother? I for one have never met two people who believed exactly the same thing. This holds true for Theology as well.” Bucer continued to work to join the Lutheran and Reformed churches- helping to write the First Helvetic Confession and the Wittenburg Concord- but full agreement was never achieved. When Calvin was fleeing for his life- Bucer welcomed him in Strasbourg. Bucer tried to get the Catholics and Protestants to form a German National Church separate from Rome, but this failed with the Schmalkaldic Wars. He was exiled to England in 1549 where he helped Thomas Cranmer with the second edition of the Second Book of Prayer. When Mary Tudor came to the throne, she tried to restore Catholicism and had Bucer’s body dug up and burned. Elizabeth I, later put a plaque down at the place of Bucer’s original burial. Bucer lived a holy, sincere life in which he valued love over theological differences.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to value the boldness of Zwingli and the love and unity treasured by Bucer.

DAY 37- 4/6/17- REFORMERS TO KNOW- OECOLAMPADIUS, MELANCHTHON

Since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and run the race set before us. (Hebrews 12:1)

Oecolampadius (1482- 11/24/1531) original name was Hussgen- or House Lamp (thus Latin Oecolampadius) born in the Electorate of Palatinate (Uppper Region of the Rhine in Germany), but later spending most of his time in Basel. For three years 1519-22 he preached in Augsburg where he encountered and accepted Luther’s teachings. He briefly became a monk but upon quitting said, “I have lost the monk and found the Christian.” Oecolampadius had a deep respect for Mary and is quoted thus from both Catholics and Protestants. He once said, that Mary is the neck that mediated the graces of the head (Christ) to the mystical body of Christ- the church. However he criticized the practices of veneration like the rosary and the abstaining from drink and sexual relations on Saturday only to over-indulge on Sunday. He represented the Reformed thinking at the Marburg Colloquy coming into disagreement with Luther.

Melanchthon (2/16/1497- 4/19/1560) was Luther’s right hand man and successor in Wittenburg. He is criticized by Lutherans of conceding too much to the Reformed in an effort for unity among the Protestants. Melanchthon was a deep thinker and theologian par excellence formulating fuller Luther’s ideas of Justification by Faith, the contrast between Law and Gospel in Lutheran thinking, and differences between his view and transubstantiation. He did not believe that the bread and wine were changed into the body and blood but were rather united with the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. Melanchthon was the main author of the Augsburg Confession, one of the great documents of the Reformation. Melanchthon also worked with Bucer to try to unite the Lutheran and Reformed branches at Marburg and the Wittenburg Concord. At the end of his life, the Lutherans were defeated militarily. Melanchthon refused to sign the Augsburg Interim. But later he signed some documents called the Leipzig Interim that many felt gave too many concessions to the Roman Catholics (conceding the indifferent/adiophora items like candles, vestments, and holy days). Some Lutherans accused him of being a heretic but he bore this with grace and hope. The Formula of Concord in 1577 re-united the Lutheran churches.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your servants who stand up for the people against the wolves of the day. Help me to be bold in standing up for you.

DAY 38- 4/7/17- REFORMERS TO KNOW- JOHN CALVIN

But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should to go Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out? (Ex. 3:11)

John Calvin (7/10/1509- 5/27/1564) was the greatest theologian of the Reformation. He was born in Noyon France, where Charlemagne was crowned in 768. John Calvin’s father, Gerard, was a lawyer for the Bishop of Noyon. His mother, Jeanne LeFranc, died perhaps of the plague when he was three years old. When Calvin was four Pope Leo X started selling indulgences- which was one of the last straws of corruption in the church for the Protestants. When Calvin was seven Erasmus made his first Greek translation of the Bible, paving the way for the Bible to be translated into German (translated by Luther), French (translated by Calvin’s cousin Olivetan), and English (Tyndale and Genevan translations- which Calvin influenced). When Calvin was three, Jacques LeFevre, a professor in Paris wrote that we are saved by grace alone. When Calvin was eight Luther posted his 95 theses on the Wittenburg door fueling the Reformation. When Calvin was 19 (1528) Henry VIII declared the Church of England Protestant. Calvin had a brother, Charles, who was an early Protestant in France and persecuted for his faith. Calvin studied law at Orleans but later went to the University of Paris. But in 1531, at 22, Calvin’s father died and Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich was killed in a battle with Catholic armies. In 1532 he wrote a humanist commentary on Seneca that didn’t sell well. Calvin wrote of his conversion in 1533

that “God by a sudden conversion subdued my heart.” In Paris Calvin helped write a sermon by Nicolas Cop expressing that the Bible was more authoritative than the church. Some authorities threatened his life. Calvin literally jumped out of a third story window to flee some entering the door. He changed his name to “Charles D’Espeville” (Charles of the City of Hope), and his own servant robbed him of all he had. Calvin fled to Basel where he wrote the first (1536) Protestant theology book, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion.” It is said that what Einstein is to physics Calvin is to theology. In 1536 Calvin visited northern Italy and was passing through Geneva when William Farel threatened him with God’s wrath unless he stayed and preached in Geneva. But when Farel and Calvin insisted the church (not the state) has the power to say who should take communion, they were exiled by Geneva’s City Council. Calvin wrote, “Surely if I had merely served humans, this would have been a poor reward. But it is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward his servants to the fullest extent of his promise.” Calvin went to Berne and then Strasburg where he preached to French exiles under the influence of Martin Bucer. In August 1540 Calvin married a widow with two children, Idelette de Bure with whom he had no children. Later Calvin boasted that in Christendom he had 10,000 children. In 1541 the Genevans begged Calvin to come back. Many from all over the world came to Geneva. John Knox said that Geneva was “the purest school of Christ on earth.” In Geneva Calvin preached every day, lectured three times a week, was present at every town council, yet found time to write thousands of letters and books. There are over 2,025 sermons in the Genevan library by him. He founded the Genevan Academy (University of Geneva and Seminary). In a time of turmoil Calvin’s writings on Providence and the Sovereignty of God took hold. His teaching was known as Reformed Theology and had influence over the Netherlands, Hungary, Scotland, parts of France, parts of England, Ferrara Italy, Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchatel, and more. At his death Pope Pius IV said, “The strength of that heretic [Calvin] consisted in this, that money never had the slightest charm for him. If I had such servants my dominion would extend from sea to sea.”

Prayer: I offer Thee my heart Lord, promptly and sincerely. (Prayer of John Calvin)

DAY 39 4/8/17- REFORMERS TO KNOW- JOHN KNOX, THOMAS CRANMER

Amos answered, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore fig trees. But the Lord took me and said, ‘Go Prophecy to my people.’” (Amos 7:14,15)

John Knox (1513- 11/24/1572) was a Scottish Reformer who both started and formed Presbyterianism in Scotland. Knox studied at the University of St. Andrews and possibly the University of Glasgow. He was influenced by Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart. Wishart had been persecuted for speaking out against the veneration of Mary. He had been exiled and when he came back to Scotland, Knox became his bodyguard brandishing a two-handed sword. However, Cardinal Beaton had Wishart arrested and burned at the stake. While Knox was a fugitive some Protestants assassinated Cardinal Beaton in St. Andrews castle. Many protestants rallied to them, including Knox. The French besieged the castle and Knox was made a French Galley slave for 19 months. In 1549 he was released in exile to England where he had influence upon the writing of the second edition of the Book of Common Prayer and became a chaplain to the young king, Edward VI. He disputed with Thomas Cranmer over kneeling in communion, so that a caveat was said that kneeling was not for veneration but humility. When Edward died, Mary Tudor tried to restore Catholicism and Knox went in exile to Geneva where he met Calvin and then to Frankfurt. When he left Frankfurt he broke all ties with the Church of England. He returned to Scotland in 1556 where he was put on trial by the bishops in Edinburgh. But he had so much noble support that the bishops delayed the trial. He returned to Geneva. He wrote (1558) “The first Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women” in which he decries women in any position of authority especially Mary Guise, Mary Tudor, and Mary Queen of Scots. Later he softened his tone before Elizabeth I of England.



1559-1560 saw the Church of Scotland become Protestant and Reformed. In 1560 Knox's wife Margery died leaving him two children under five. In 1561 Knox and five others named John wrote the Scots Confession and the Book of Discipline that promoted a predecessor of Presbyterianism where each congregation could hire but not fire their ministers, and superintendents, not bishops, were put in charge. However it was not until 1689 that Presbyterianism took full root. In 1562 and 1563 the catholic Queen Mary accused Knox of being irreverent and even treason but he was exonerated. She supposedly said, "I fear the prayers of Knox more than all the armies of Europe." Indeed Knox prayed while in one of his many exiles, "Give me Scotland or I die." He was also purported to have said, "One man and God is a majority." Knox died and his remains are in a barely marked grave in the parking lot. He taught his followers not to revere him, but to listen to his teachings from the Word of God.

Thomas Cranmer (7/2/1489- 3/21/1556) was Archbishop of Canterbury during the time England separated from the Latin Catholic church. He wrote arguments for the annulment of King Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon and the idea of Royal Supremacy, that the king should be in charge of the churches in his realm. He was born to a modest family in Nottinghamshire. He studied at Cambridge and also studied LeFevre and Erasmus, Christian humanist with some reforming ideas. In 1532 he was appointed ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire and set aside his vows to marry Margarete the niece of a reformer in Nuremberg, Osiander. Cranmer was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury 3/30/1533 and immediately began working on the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine. Cranmer later oversaw the annulment of two other marriages at Henry's convenience. Later it was found that Henry had already secretly married Anne Boleyn. Cranmer became Henry's main confidant when Thomas Cromwell was executed. However, the church made few reforms until after Henry died and the young Edward VI succeeded him. Then Cranmer was able to write the Book of Common Prayer that had a vast influence on the English language. He allowed Bucer and Knox to come into England and influence the second edition of the Book of Common Prayer. When the catholic Mary ascended the throne she declared Cranmer a heretic and treasonous. Cranmer recanted his Protestantism- but on the day he was executed he recanted his recantations.



Prayer: Lord, we have horribly offended you. Have mercy on us and lead us in the way of righteousness this day. (From Prayers of Knox)

DAY 40 4/9/17 Palm Sunday- EFFECTS OF THE REFORMATION

The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Psalm 118:23; Mark 12:11

Thoughts:

The world is not the same because of the Protestant Reformation. Though it was a long time coming (think Wycliffe, Waldo and John Hus) it has a long term effect. In some ways the Reformation was fueled by and fueled the Renaissance. Most of the Reformers were humanists who sought to get back to the source- the Bible, and were well schooled in their day. The political power of the Roman Catholic church broke as it both fought and could not fight the Reformation and its leaders. Feudalism gave way to nationalism both by the Reformers (like Cranmer in England and Knox and Scotland) and the reaction to the Protestants in France and the Netherlands. Democracy and individualism were influenced by the idea that we didn't have to go through a priest and people could read scripture alone. Many point to Calvinism as a tremendous influence on the checks and balances found in American government, and presbyterianism's representative democracy as influencing the representative democracy of America and others. The rise of the middle class was definitely inspired by the Protestant work ethic of both Luther and Calvin who valued every day work and encouraged all to do their best for the glory of God. Vernacular Languages of German, French, and English were tremendously effected by the writings of the German Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and King James Version in English, the French Bible of Olivetan and Calvin's writings.

There were also some negative things. The church divided then divided then divided again. In the midst of the divisions the main teaching of love has been downplayed. Many of the teachings of the Reformation once rejected in the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent are now mollified with Vatican I and Vatican II councils that recognize the

limits of the veneration of the saints, the problems of indulgences, and the idea that we are saved by grace and not by works. There has been a tremendous shift in the Catholic church. At the same time, some Protestants today are downplaying the basis of their own belief systems saying that scholarship and science should be elevated to the same position of authority as the Bible. There has clearly been a growing skepticism in western Europe and among the old mainline churches of the Reformation in America. There are some who say that every 500 years a change is made and we should embrace that change. But the Book of Judges (everyone did what was right in their own eyes), the deterioration that led to the Old Testament and Diaspora exiles should warn us that not all change is good. We should be ever reforming- but not omit- "According to the Word of God." It is clear that without belief and the Spirit no church or even great principle will stand on its own. The church today needs to get back to its roots, which was the original call of the Reformation (the solas: Scripture, Grace, Faith, Glory to God, and Christ Alone) and also return to our first love.

Prayer: Lord, help me to change. Keep me from being conformed to the world but to be transformed in a way that honors you alone. May my life glorify you alone.

The 95 Theses – a modern translation

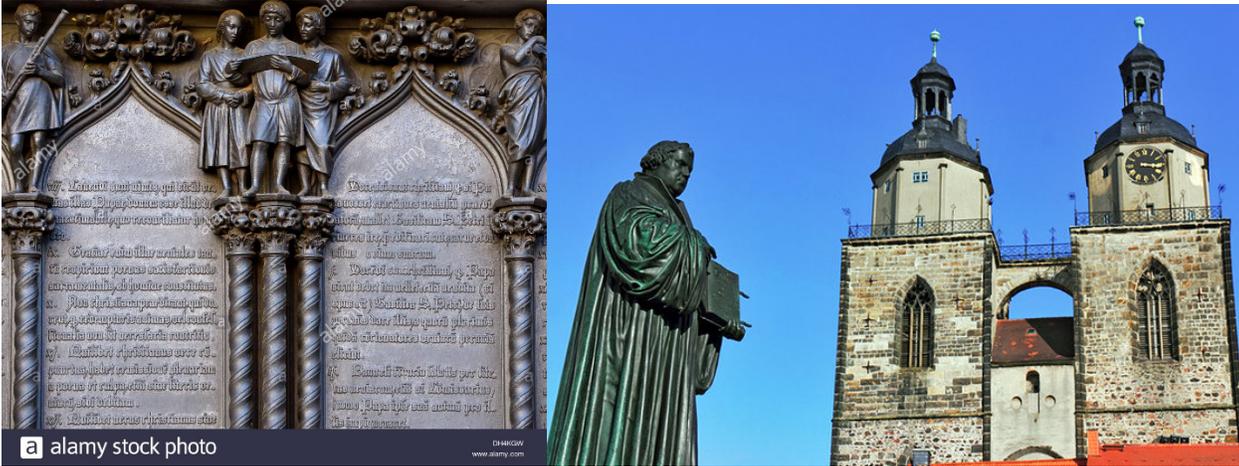
Citation: C N Trueman "The 95 Theses – a modern translation"

historylearningsite.co.uk. The History Learning Site, 17 Mar 2015. 20 Oct 2016.

1. When Jesus said "repent" he meant that believers should live a whole life repenting . Only God can give salvation – not a priest.
3. Inwards penitence must be accompanied with a suitable change in lifestyle.
4. Sin will always remain until we enter Heaven.
5. The pope must act according to canon law.
6. Only God can forgive -the pope can only reassure people that God will do this.
7. A sinner must be humbled in front of his priest before God can forgive him.
8. Canon law applies only to the living not to the dead.
9. However, the Holy Spirit will make exceptions to this when required to do so.
10. The priest must not threaten those dying with the penalty of purgatory.
11. The church through church penalties is producing a 'human crop of weeds'.
12. In days gone by, church penalties were imposed before release from guilt to show true repentance.
13. When you die all your debts to the church are wiped out and those debts are free from being judged.14. When someone is dying they might have bad/incorrect thoughts against the church and they will be scared. This fear is enough penalty.
15. This fear is so bad that it is enough to cleanse the soul.
16. Purgatory = Hell. Heaven = Assurance.
17. Souls in Purgatory need to find love – the more love the less their sin.
18. A sinful soul does not have to be always sinful. It can be cleansed.
19. There is no proof that a person is free from sin.
20. Even the pope – who can offer forgiveness – cannot totally forgive sins held within.
21. An indulgence will not save a man.
22. A dead soul cannot be saved by an indulgence.
23. Only a very few sinners can be pardoned. These people would have to be perfect.
24. Therefore most people are being deceived by indulgences.
25. The pope's power over Purgatory is the same as a priest's.
26. When the pope intervenes to save an individual, he does so by the will of God.
27. It is nonsense to teach that a dead soul in Purgatory can be saved by money.
28. Money causes greed – only God can save souls.
29. Do we know if the souls in Purgatory want to be saved ?
30. No-one is sure of the reality of his own penitence – no-one can be sure of receiving complete forgiveness.
31. A man who truly buys an indulgence (ie believes it is to be what it is) is as rare as someone who truly repents all sin ie very rare.
32. People who believe that indulgences will let them live in salvation will always be damned – along with those who teach it.
33. Do not believe those who say that a papal indulgence is a wonderful gift which allows salvation.
34. Indulgences only offer Man something which has been agreed to by Man.
35. We should not teach that those who aim to buy salvation do not need to be contrite.
36. A man can be free of sin if he sincerely repents – an indulgence is not needed.
37. Any Christian – dead or alive – can gain the benefit and love of Christ without an indulgence.
38. Do not despise the pope's forgiveness but his forgiveness is not the most important.
39. The most educated theologians cannot preach about indulgences and real repentance at the same time.
40. A true repenter will be sorry for his sins and happily pay for them. Indulgences trivialise this issue.
41. If a pardon is given it should be given cautiously in case people think it's more important than doing good works.
42. Christians should be taught that the buying of indulgences does not compare with being forgiven by Christ.

43. A Christian who gives to the poor or lends to those in need is doing better in God's eyes than one who buys 'forgiveness'.
44. This is because of loving others, love grows and you become a better person. A person buying an indulgence does not become a better person.
45. A person who passes by a beggar but buys an indulgence will gain the anger and disappointment of God.
46. A Christian should buy what is necessary for life not waste money on an indulgence.
47. Christians should be taught that they do not need an indulgence.
48. The pope should have more desire for devout prayer than for ready money.
49. Christians should be taught not to rely on an indulgence. They should never lose their fear of God through them.
50. If a pope knew how much people were being charged for an indulgence – he would prefer to demolish St. Peter's.
51. The pope should give his own money to replace that which is taken from pardoners.
52. It is vain to rely on an indulgence to forgive your sins.
53. Those who forbid the word of God to be preached and who preach pardons as a norm are enemies of both the pope and Christ.
54. It is blasphemy that the word of God is preached less than that of indulgences.
55. The pope should enforce that the gospel – a very great matter – must be celebrated more than indulgences.
56. The treasure of the church is not sufficiently known about among the followers of Christ.
57. The treasure of the Church are temporal (of this life).
58. Relics are not the relics of Christ, although they may seem to be. They are, in fact, evil in concept.
59. St. Laurence misinterpreted this as the poor gave money to the church for relics and forgiveness.
60. Salvation can be sought for through the church as it has been granted this by Christ.
61. It is clear that the power of the church is adequate, by itself, for the forgiveness of sins.
62. The main treasure of the church should be the Gospels and the grace of God.
63. Indulgences make the most evil seem unjustly good.
64. Therefore evil seems good without penance or forgiveness.
65. The treasured items in the Gospels are the nets used by the workers.
66. Indulgences are used to net an income for the wealthy.
67. It is wrong that merchants praise indulgences.
68. They are the furthest from the grace of God and the piety and love of the cross.
69. Bishops are duty bound to sell indulgences and support them as part of their job.
70. But bishops are under a much greater obligation to prevent men preaching their own dreams.
71. People who deny the pardons of the Apostles will be cursed.
72. Blessed are they who think about being forgiven.
73. The pope is angered at those who claim that pardons are meaningless.
74. He will be even more angry with those who use indulgences to criticise holy love.
75. It is wrong to think that papal pardons have the power to absolve all sin.
76. You should feel guilt after being pardoned. A papal pardon cannot remove guilt.
77. Not even St. Peter could remove guilt.
78. Even so, St. Peter and the pope possess great gifts of grace.
79. It is blasphemy to say that the insignia of the cross is of equal value with the cross of Christ.
80. Bishops who authorise such preaching will have to answer for it.
81. Pardoners make the intelligent appear disrespectful because of the pope's position.
82. Why doesn't the pope clean feet for holy love not for money ?
83. Indulgences bought for the dead should be re-paid by the pope.
84. Evil men must not buy their salvation when a poor man, who is a friend of God, cannot.
85. Why are indulgences still bought from the church ?
86. The pope should re-build St. Peter's with his own money.
87. Why does the pope forgive those who serve against him ?
88. What good would be done to the church if the pope was to forgive hundreds of people each day ?
89. Why are indulgences only issued when the pope sees fit to issue them ?
90. To suppress the above is to expose the church for what it is and to make true Christians unhappy.

91. If the pope had worked as he should (and by example) all the problems stated above would not have existed.
92. All those who say there is no problem must go. Problems must be tackled.
93. Those in the church who claim there is no problem must go.
94. Christians must follow Christ at all cost.
95. Let Christians experience problems if they must – and overcome them – rather than live a false life based on present Catholic teaching.



On October 31, 1517 Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the St. Mary's Church door in Wittenburg. This was the official beginning of the Reformation.

Above are the 95 theses in stone; Right is a statue of Luther at St. Mary's Church.

