

Introduction

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[0 : 00] We've now come to a new year and a new study and we will conclude our gathering in here around mid-May.

! And I'm confident we'll still be in this study until a year from this May.

So we're going to cover a lot of ground. I wanted to come up with a title and I struggled with that because there were several directions I could go.

But I'm calling it the Rescue of the Gospel. The Rescue of the Gospel. Now, here at Highland Park, we have become familiar with the term Reformation or Reform theology.

None of us understands it comprehensively. It entails a lot. But at least we're talking about it. And whether we know it or not, and there are a lot of people that's a buzzword and angers them, but whether they realize it or not, on Sunday morning, they're sitting in a church somewhere in our country because there was a Reformation.

[1 : 33] Probably the only denomination that would be safe in saying we're not a product of the Reformation is Roman Catholicism. And they were more the target of the Reformation, which we'll talk about.

In this church, probably the first time we started talking about Reformation was under Dr. Eliff.

Continued under Dr. Coleman. Has continued still under Pastor Mike.

And I'm grateful to God for these men. Two Mondays ago, last Monday was ice and snow and cold.

Two Mondays ago, Brother Lee brought us a video by Pastor Jeff Long out of North Carolina. He had learned about this from Pastor Don, Don Coleman, who's been visiting there.

And in that video, Pastor Long spoke eloquently about the doctrine of justification by faith.

[2 : 40] And it was a fitting introduction to that gloriously important biblical teaching. And I see God's hand in all of this because everything that's going to follow the viewing of that video relates back to that theme.

And I see God's providence at work. The topic of justification by faith is really the gateway for all that we're going to do the remainder of this calendar year and into the next year into about May. Now, back to this term Reformation. It is used to describe a movement initially within a very small portion of the church in the 16th century.

Leaders of the movement that the names you would be familiar with are people like Luther and Calvin and Knox, who was from Scotland, and Zwingli from Switzerland.

Now, there were others. Many of the men that participated in the Reformation, we will not hear about.

[4 : 00] We don't even know their names. And we won't hear about them until we get to heaven. And some Reformers actually came before Luther.

And I might mention them next week. Men like Wycliffe and Huss were giants in the movement, but in the case of Huss, 100 plus years before Luther arrived on the scene.

Luther is the one, though, that typically gets the credit because he's the one that hung the 95 Theses on the door at the church at Wittenberg. And now there's a move on by the liberal church, so that never happened.

And bear in mind that some of the Reformers were martyred for their faith. I toured a Bible museum down in Florida years ago.

And there was a Bible there from the 16th century, a Wycliffe Bible, that was covered in blood because the Catholic Church had sent people in there to seize that Bible, ended up killing the owner as he was reading the Bible.

[5 : 14] And it was still bloodstained. You could tell it had been soaked in blood. In his sovereignty, God placed these men on a collision course with the church of their day.

And that is to say the church at Rome in the 16th century. And in some respects, the Reformers went to war with the Roman Catholic Church.

They didn't intend to, but it ended up that way. It really did end up that way. The church at Rome had abandoned the Gospel of Christ and they substituted in its place a works theology for salvation. The interesting thing is some of the early Reformers were Roman Catholic priests. Luther, Calvin. The early Reformers were Roman Catholic priests.

They wanted to reform the church from within. But the church wouldn't hear of it. We cannot understate this, but the Roman Catholic version of salvation met the warnings of the Apostle Paul who wrote these divinely inspired words in the first chapter of the book of Galatians.

[6 : 38] This is from the Holy Spirit. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the Gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a Gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Now in Paul's day and beyond, there were other Gospels. These were Gospels that sought to turn men away from the grace of God and turn them to their own brand of teaching which Paul labels as a different Gospel.

And Paul goes on to say that these Gospels are a distortion of the true version. And there were many of them. There were the Judaizers and the Gnostics and we'll probably cover those some day in the near future.

[8 : 04] And Paul gives this most stern warning. If an angel comes down out of heaven preaching one of these false Gospels, or if Paul himself abandoned the true faith and embraced a false Gospel, he says, let him be accursed.

And your translation may refer to that or use the word, let him be the anathema of God. And the accursed or the anathema of God are those who have been placed by God under eternal damnation.

That's a frightening thought. And it's a long time. Eternally condemned. They are the eternally condemned by God.

And God takes any perversion of the true Gospel as a very serious matter. And as we will see, this is really what launched the Reformation.

It really did. The Reformation was an effort by men to recover or rescue, if you will, the Gospel of Christ that had been stolen and perverted by Rome into a different Gospel which was really no Gospel at all.

[9 : 36] So when we mention that word Reformation, just think of it in terms of a rescue operation and it will help. So what exactly had Rome done that was so egregious to the Reformers?

Well, what they had done is they had mixed grace and works and they mixed them together as a means of salvation and out came a hybrid for salvation.

They would tell you in the 16th century that salvation was achieved by joining a Catholic church and doing certain works that the priesthood declared satisfactory for salvation.

And one of the works was the paying of indulgences. They were huge on indulgences. That was a system of donating money to the church primarily in order to buy a dead relative out of hell or purgatory wherever they might be at that moment.

And purgatory is also an invention of man by the way. This was particularly hard. These indulgences were hard on the poor members who could not stand the thought that a family member was at that moment suffering needed someone to purchase their freedom from divine wrath from punishment and some of the raised money was used also to fund wars it's hard to believe but the Pope was also the general of an army and they were used to fund wars so that the Roman Pope launched a war against countries that opposed his teachings and it's all twisted at one time there were three popes they were fighting against each other and it goes on and on and on that was why we needed a reformation in the 16th century they had lost the gospel of

[11 : 53] Christ but that was a long time ago and there's only one or two of us in here that were alive in the 16th century right Oscar I'm not looking at anybody I'm not looking at Jerry I'm old I know I'm old what about those of us living in the 21st century what about us do we need a reformation and I believe the answer is yes and let me pick on a few okay not individuals in here let

me pick on some the liberal churches lost the gospel some of the very extreme charismatic churches have lost the gospel and I don't brand all charismatics is lost not by a long shot I've got some dear friends that we agree to disagree on certain points but love the Lord but the extreme guys with bad hairdos you know they lost the gospel and dare

I say that some main line evangelical denominations and churches have lost the gospel and some of those include southern baptist churches there are some southern baptist churches you guys got to remember something this Oklahoma we are on the buckle of the bible belt and you don't have to travel very far to start running into some very liberal southern baptist churches we have them in Oklahoma we have them in Tulsa!

Arkansas North Carolina North Carolina they're everywhere I went to the Dallas convention I think in 1986 with Ed Saucier and we ran into a friend of his he'd gone to seminary with and we had lunch with him and there was a pastor there that he knew and they exchanged greetings and the guy left and he told Ed and me he said I can't believe that guy's even here he is rabidly liberal he's a southern baptist he said they support they pay to have babies aborted they support abortion they support listen to all the things I mean this was a disconnect for me you go to churches today in America a lot of them you say what must I do to be saved and you will get from a lot of them an answer back well have you prayed the prayer that's what they want to know have you prayed the prayer and you say well what prayer are you talking about and they will say the sinner's prayer and that has become for a lot of churches the new gospel the new standard for salvation and you know in all candor

I believe that Paul would be appalled and when I wrote that I put no pun intended because it sounds odd Paul was appalled but I think he would be it took me several years of research and thought to realize the sinner's prayer is not the requirement it's not a requirement for salvation and second you can't find it in scripture I've told you before the closest you'll come is a tax collector who said Lord have mercy on me a sinner and he beat himself up and you know Lord have mercy on me a sinner but there are millions of people walking around believing that they're going to be in heaven because a well-meaning parent well-meaning Sunday school teacher and pastor had them repeat a prayer one time decades ago

I have friends and I have family that believe that to this day they don't want anything to do with the church they don't want anything to do with the word of God they don't want anything to do with you know anything connected to Christianity but in the words of one of our relatives who now passed I got my fire insurance when I was 12 went to a concert and they said repeat repeat after me you know and he did let me give you an illustration one time there was a class that met it at a church and there was a well-meaning very distraught woman got up and asked for prayer for her grown daughter she said my daughter really needs prayer she said she grew up she got to running with the wrong crowd she has struggled with drug addiction and that leads to obviously running with the wrong crowd a lot of her crowd became were drug dealers drug users and they were more than happy to loan this woman out to men to consummate a drug deal in lieu of cash she became pregnant and had three kids by at least two different men perhaps three we don't know for sure when the first two children were young men were allowed to spend the night with them we got kids in here that's as far as I'll go it's as bad as you can imagine now the woman telling the story went on with tears and said in fact we believe my daughter has participated in that kind of abuse with her own children and honestly

[17 : 50] I don't believe there was a dry eye in that room I do not believe that finally a well-meaning woman spoke up and said but has your daughter ever prayed the prayer and this really weeping mother said yeah when she was about nine I repeated it I gave it to her and she repeated it and she said this well-meaning woman said well alright then she's prayed the prayer it'll be okay all will be well you know that really hit me because at that point in my walk I led people into prayer I had some scalps on my belt that's what Ron Dunn used to say that exchange occurred in this room it is time that we've got to abandon foolishness guys we really do we embrace the true gospel we teach others to do as well the gospel of Christ mark this down the gospel of Christ is the greatest treasure given by the father to the church and to individual

Christians it's the greatest it's the pearl of great price it's the greatest treasure it is not a message it is the message it is the message what does the word of God have to say about the gospel first it is the power now keep that thought in your head it is the power of God for salvation and I didn't make that up listen to Romans 1 16 for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for

salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek and by the way that word power there is the same word that we use today for dynamite so it's pretty powerful the Bible also teaches that the gospel is the greatest revelation of the wisdom of God in the universe Ephesians 3:8 to 10 to me though I am the very least of all the saints that's Paul this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places and let me add something that's not in the notes here we couldn't invent that this is divinely inspired man wouldn't come up with that we would be incapable of creating that the most brilliant minds in the world couldn't create that

Paul had probably the most brilliant mind in the world other than Jesus that is why the apostle Paul gave us the gospel preached the gospel every opportunity and he pronounced a curse on anyone who would pervert its truth now my next point may be the most important truth you will hear during our study over the next months years however long this takes it may be the most important truth you will ever hear in your lifetime every believing man in this room is a steward of the gospel of Christ every one of us we are responsible through the power of the Holy Spirit to guard the treasure of the gospel in our generation

God has entrusted it to us so as faithful stewards we're to do what are we to do with the gospel we must absorb ourselves in the study of the gospel we must strive diligently to understand the truth of the gospel we must guard the gospel against any perversion of it now if we guard this gospel are there rewards for doing that well we have the message of salvation for ourselves if we embrace the true gospel read it study it learn it memorize it believe it we have the message of salvation for ourselves we have the message of salvation for our families we have the message of salvation for our church and we have the message of salvation for a darkening and dying world and guys it's getting dark out there and we have God's greatest treasure to pass on to the next generation and you know in this room right now we've got at least three generations we really do and we're to pass this on this guarded treasure to the next generation the greatest crime committed in our generation is the neglect and ultimate perversion of the gospel of Christ now what has brought this about well I put in my study notes here and this is error this is wrong I say back 40 or 50 years ago this is 2018 it's further back than that in some ways this really started in the 19th century with the or two things that happened the rise of evolutionary theory and the higher critical school in Germany which was a denial of the gospel and they started trying to wed Darwinian evolution with the Bible especially the pre-Abrahamic history and Genesis so back a long time ago there was a hardening of the gospel message the liberal church abandoned the gospel because it was too exclusive and bloody it was too bloody we had a dear lady here that an organist Penny Ferris when she was a single girl she went to a church down in Norman for a whole summer because her organist took a three month sabbatical when she got down to the committee met with a Methodist church and they met with her and they said don't preach any song don't play any song that says God the Father don't play any song that says Jesus is the Son and don't play any song that says it talks about blood and other than that you play anything you want to you know what she led every Sunday off with then and they loved her a Catholic mass which sounds like classical music I mean it was lilting and they said oh we just love that teach our organist that when she gets back they had no clue the liberal church abandoned the gospel because they didn't know Christ so how can they know his gospel they did a social gospel how can we improve this world now I'm all for helping people don't misunderstand me but I'm not going to polish brass on a sinking ship you know that's not the time to be polishing brass following this hardening many churches and denominations became

[26 : 30] ignorant of the gospel and this happened across denominational lines guys don't underestimate how close we came boy a hair's breadth God raised up about six or ten men and you know some of them they've been in this church to rescue the gospel for the Southern Baptists the true gospel was lost along with its basic tenets I have three personal examples I want to relate to you the first of that was a good friend of mine fellow FBI agent I worked with and we were out driving one day and I knew that his father had pastored a very liberal church down in Oklahoma City and had done so for decades and Pete told me he said I never once missed church growing up well I shared I began sharing with him the gospel of Christ and he said you know I never have heard that of that not one time in all those years I've never not only have I not heard the concept of what you're talking about Jesus died for my sins I've not heard the concept I've not heard the word gospel it was totally unfamiliar to me he went on to say that you know he thought that he was okay because he's

a pretty good guy and he is a good guy i shared with a lawyer in town here and every lawyer needs to hear the gospel and i shared with a local attorney and he was a pillar within his liberal church downtown he said you're telling me something i've never heard of christ was a sacrifice and did you say to satisfy the wrath of god the father and he's their only means of salvation and he said i thought you did all that by good works or at least did more good works than bad and the third which i've related to you recently was a local baptist preacher very strong in the faith reformed guy and was visited by his very liberal counterpart in another denomination and as their conversation progressed my friend said how do you guys deal with the atonement of christ in your denomination in your church this liberal pastor had a phd or thd or whatever and he said i have never heard that term the atonement that's new to me that's gospel ignorance that's gospel ignorance but even among many conservative evangelical churches the situation is dire and we've seen over the last couple of generations the gospel and the accompanying evangelistic effort reduced to its lowest common denominator why'd they do that they wanted to get it most palatable to the greatest number of people at any one time and i i'm going to get in trouble and i pretty much live there anyway both at work and at home but you know i'm really kind of turned off with massive crusades i never attended a promise keepers if they ever come out with promise breakers i'll join that because i've broken many of them to god made to god you never want to comment negatively on dr.

graham because it's like you're talking about god you know and he's done great work he was asked one time by larry king said how many people you know have been saved under your ministry he said one probably two because i'm pretty sure my wife ruth is saved too but he understood that part but when you reduce that gospel down so it's most exciting and acceptable to everybody you're going to leave some people behind you're going to leave them behind and some churches believe the gospel to be a few statements of faith that conversion is a human decision the spirit of god plays no role in the work of winning a soul and they will proclaim assurance of salvation to anyone who prays a prayer and the worst is they teach that there are two types of christians and this came out of one of the most conservative fundamental seminaries in america and i've got books by some of their professors and they're good guys and i'm sure they're saved men but it came out of their seminary they say there's two kind of christians walk around this earth there are spiritual christians and there are carnal christians and this false teaching says that at conversion you're at a crossroads you're at a why in the road and what yoke gibera say take it you're at a why in the road do i want to be spiritual do i want to remain carnal and have fun and and keep all this aberrant stuff up and they say that the key is you're at the crossroads so it doesn't matter which road you take they will both terminate in heaven and will will be there forever together that's taught i've read it in their literature um that's false they falsely assert that both paths spiritual and carnal lead to eternal life in heaven let me say guys there's room for carnality there better be there are times we're carnal we live in a carnal world we live in a sinful world and we live in unredeemed flesh and the battle was joined when we got saved because that which is pure and perfect and holy and eternal entered into us and he's working out his plan inside our unredeemed flesh and there is a war and i'll just let you in on a little secret i've been engaged in that war for some time now and it's wearing me out but i but i know my redeemer liveth okay i know my redeemer liveth but we're we're in the battle this is a battle this is a war and you know what guys our kids are in that war our kids are in that war the perversion of the true gospel has had devastating results first it hardened the unconverted into falsely believing they already took care of that by praying the sinner's prayer therefore they don't need the church i've had people tell me 20 years ago 30 years ago i don't want to hear about jesus all you guys ever talk about jesus i took care of that when i was 11 or i took care i remember one guy he was german guy broke out a four spiritual law track which i have a problem with but but he broke it out on an airplane over the atlantic ocean and said could i share this with you that guy says do they pay you guys

to fly he said every time i'm on an airplane someone gives me one of these second many churches have become a gathering of carnal men who profess to know god because they've been through the right actions but they're very actions by those they deny him people deny christ they don't even realize they're denying him one guy preached a message one time and he said the gospel is so watered down the non-elect don't have an opportunity to reject it that's how watered down it is third it has wreaked havoc on missions guys it's it's killing missions people across america and especially in foreign lands go in depending on their denomination depending on what school they went to in in the same denomination and they have conflicting ways to get saved and and they they

they present these to the indigenous peoples and it confuses one who doesn't even yet have the holy spirit as the resident teacher one guy says we'll do this and you'll be saved another guy says do this and you'll be saved and they're conflicting see my point

I think I made it rather weakly but that's the point and and they're they're confused do I do what this guy said do I do what this guy said you mean I can get saved but I can keep doing what I'm doing and live carnally well I kind of like to do that it's confusing fourth the false gospel brings reproach to the name of God it's a reproach to him it's the treasure Christ died for the gospel to present us the gospel it's the gold nuggets on the tree in heaven that we'll pick off for eternity what is all the what is the end result of all this where is this headed where are we at in our day with the false gospel that's all around us well first of all any church or denomination that embraces the false gospel

God cannot be glorified God is not glorified Christ is not magnified the church is not edified the unconverted are not reconciled and the church has no basis of witnessing to an unbelieving world they'll create an even worse unbeliever if they give them a false gospel I really think we would all do well to heed the words of the prince of preachers Charles Haddon Spurgeon he said this and he died in 1998 or right in that turn of the century did I say 1998 1898 1898 he better be dead I've been to his grave in these days I feel bound to go over again the elementary truths of the gospel as a [38 : 03] Spurgeon in peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield but now we must stay at home and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith in this age there have arisen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things there may be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain it is well that some of us who know what we believe and have no secret meanings in our words should just put our foot down and maintain our standing holding forth the word of life and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus

Christ now toward the end of his life Spurgeon warned about the downgrade movement and you can get that online you can look up his sermons and in his day the downgrade movement was the liberal church takeover of Christianity in England and boy it's taking it over I've been to Europe many times England Scotland Scotland was the hotbed of reformation guys the lights have gone out they have gone out I was in Switzerland where the reformation started in that country and there was a church there that could have seated I guess 10,000 about 300 people came out Diane and I went to a church in Glasgow Scotland that's bigger than downtown Bartlesville the church and there were 12 of us in there and Diane and I were the youngest and the next were like 80 years old and I asked one older lady she's the only one that even talked to us and I said what happens to this church when you guys are gone she said it's a museum it's already been planned it becomes a museum here's what

Spurgeon said a little bit of what he said about the downgrade the takeover of Christianity in England no lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil we are willing to make a large discount from our apprehensions on the score of natural timidity the caution of age and the weakness produced by pain but our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many churches than they seem to be and are rapidly trending downward read those newspapers which represent the broad school of dissent and ask yourself how much further could they go what doctrine remains to be abandoned what are the truth to be the object of contempt a new religion has been initiated which is no more

Christianity than chalk is cheese version was good with words and this religion being destitute of moral honesty palms itself off as the old faith but with slight improvements and on this plea usurped pulpits!

which were erected for gospel preaching the atonement is scouted I'm not sure what that means in ancient English the inspiration of scripture is derided the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence the punishment of sin is turned into fiction and the resurrection is a myth and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them the case is mournful certain ministers are making infidels avowed atheists are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith Germany was made unbelieving by her preachers and we won't get in tonight and gave rise to Hitler the liberal church there and England is following in her tracks now a few years later just a couple years after he preached that

[43 : 08] Spurgeon died a broken man why was he broken because when he started preaching on the downgrade the Baptist Union their equivalent of what we would call the SBC here the Baptist

Union of England listened or read his messages on the downgrade movement and essentially brought Spurgeon up on charges for preaching against so many quote brothers that are part of the downgrade the liberal church so they had a big convocation 2007 people showed up to consider whether or not Spurgeon should be censured and that was the equivalent being kicked out of the Baptist Union a motion was made to censure

Spurgeon the man that seconded the motion was a man named James Spurgeon Charles' brother and a vote was held 2,000 people voted to censure Spurgeon 7 voted no and shortly after that Spurgeon died and many would say it killed him that killed him I've been to his tomb Mike you went to Metropolitan!

Tabernary did you see his tomb he's in another part of London written on his tomb are the words of 2 Timothy 4 7 I have fought the good fight I have finished the course I have kept the faith and Spurgeon said I want a small grave and I want anything written on there but he had a massive tomb and they wrote that he would be pleased with that scripture though and what would he say to us today he would say 21st century guys you must keep the faith the first step in doing so is to make sure we're in the faith you