

The Need for Reformation

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[0:00] So we'll conclude our study on the seven churches of Revelation tonight.

A lot of different passages of Scripture, so we're not just going to land in one. But I am going to read, let's read together Revelation chapter 22, the last chapter of the Bible, beginning in verse 6 and we'll go to the end.

Revelation chapter 22, beginning in verse 6. And he said to me, these words are trustworthy and true.

And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things, and when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. But he said to me, you must not do that.

[1:30] I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and the prophets and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God. And he said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let the one who hears say, come. And let the one who is thirsty come.

[2:38] Let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. So this week I saw an article about a church in Pennsylvania.

It's a Presbyterian church and they have begun an eight-week study, a sermon series titled, Harry Potter Meets Jesus. Have you heard of this?

And so, you know, each Sunday he's taking a character from the Harry Potter series and he's talking about how that character, you know, he's trying to draw parallels to Scripture.

[3:48] And, you know, this person is like this person in the Bible. Anyhow, the lengths that people will go to to draw a crowd, I mean, he certainly has drawn attention, this pastor, to his church.

Another church, so I'm reading a book called Shame to the Gospel by John MacArthur. And this is, now understand, this was back in the early 90s when he wrote this book. And so a lot of his illustrations come from that time period.

There was a church in Texas and they had professional wrestling matches in their parking lot, you know, between the church staff.

Don't get any ideas. No ideas. Yeah, but, you know, people came. And so the thing about different things like that, I mean, we could spend all night talking about the different things that we've seen churches do or heard of churches doing to draw a crowd.

And that's the thing is that it's easy to draw a crowd, but a crowd is not a congregation. There's a big difference. People for decades have spoken of the need for revival in our nation and the need of reformation in our church.

[5:04] Revivals, you know, I've noticed that back up in Kansas, we didn't have nearly as many revivals as you all do down here. We did so back, I remember, growing up.

But, you know, they're occasionally able to stir up the body of the local fellowship, the believers there, and spurn them onwards towards, you know, being more obedient in what they should have been doing all along, right?

So that's possible. But what would it take? I mean, when we're speaking of revival, at least when I'm speaking about it tonight, we're talking about like a national revival, a widespread revival that goes across our world, maybe even across our nation, I should say, maybe even across our world.

What would it mean to have a new reformation today? What would have to change? What would have to happen to trigger that kind of revival? To begin with, the church would have to pursue obedience to the Lord's commands to be holy as He is holy, 1 Peter 1.16.

According to what we've read in Christ's message to the seven churches, God's people need to bring an end to flirtations with worldliness and get serious about dealing with the sin that is in their midst.

[6:22] So revival is going to start within the church. And if it's going to start within the church, then we need to get serious about the things that the Lord tells us to be serious about. Christ calls for His church to be fully committed to Him.

A church that loves Him and no other. A church that confronts sin and takes seriously His plea for personal holiness and sound theology. The reformation that the church needs to have produced cannot be, I should say, produced by man-made strategies.

It's not going to happen by our own man-made efforts and our own schemes and our own devices.

Now, understand that I know that we do have some strategies of evangelism, right?

In fact, we've taught some in our church. Three circles of evangelism. There's the ever-popular Evangel-Cube, right? There you go, Shirley. And understand that those are strategies that I believe are rooted in Scripture.

And the purpose of those strategies is to communicate the gospel. Jesus talks about different things in His messages, in His conversations with people.

[7:32] In His earthly ministry, He uses examples of living water, of bread of life. He uses illustrations in order to better communicate the gospel and truth to them. And so, you know, these strategies, we're seeking to do the same thing.

But there is a line that we must be careful not to cross. My hope would be that, you know, as we use those different tools for evangelism, that hopefully we get to the point where those tools aren't as necessary because we just feel so comfortable with speaking to people and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others that you say, oh, darn, I left my Evangel-Cube at home.

I can't share the gospel with people today. No, no, no, no, no. Because you've used that tool and it has equipped you and now you don't really need it anymore. The church isn't facing unique problems that demand clever new solutions.

Satan's strategies have not changed. And according to 2 Corinthians 2.11, we are not ignorant of his schemes. He assaults the church in the same way that he did in the first century.

If anything, what has changed is the church's willingness to compromise with the world and accommodate false teaching. Rather than engaging in spiritual warfare against satanic lies and anti-Christian ideologies, too many churches have declared an unbiblical truce with the world and stopped fighting for God's truth altogether.

[9:02] Innovative church models and unorthodox evangelistic strategies won't solve the problem we're facing. New methods for the church that aren't tethered to biblical truth or the pursuit of holiness and not solutions, they're how we get here in the first place.

More of the same won't solve our current problem. So wrestling matches aren't going to do it. Rather, as much as I know that you would really be entertained by that, it's not ever going to happen as long as I...

God's people need to recover and reaffirm the historical theological principles behind life transformations that invite true reformation in the first place.

So here's the main idea for our study tonight. That all the issues that ail and impair the church today could be dealt with by renewed emphasis on the five solas, S-O-L-A-S, the five solas of the Protestant Reformation that occurred in the 16th century.

So we've got to go back to that first Reformation and there learn, you know, what sparked it, what caused it, what was the motivation behind it, and regain a love for those things that they loved and cherish those things that they cherished and champion those causes that they championed.

[10:30] The reformers were guided by the conviction that the church of their day had drifted away from the essential, original teachings of Christianity, especially in regard to what it was teaching about salvation, how people can be forgiven of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and receive eternal life with God.

The Reformation sought to reorient Christianity on the original message of Jesus and the early church. The five solas are five Latin phrases or slogans that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the reformers' theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.

So first up is sola scriptura, Scripture alone. That's what that means. Scripture alone. This was the formal principle of the Reformation and it's foundational to all the other key doctrines of the reformers.

It was the first and primary point of departure from the corrupting influence of the Catholic Church. Martin Luther was not the first to complain and point out how the Catholic Church had abused the Word of God and how they had developed teachings that had no biblical basis.

However, it was Martin Luther's relentless appeal to the authority of Scripture that ended up sparking the Reformation. Historically, that is the pattern with revival. Every great movement of God in the world is launched by the recovery of Scripture.

[12:01] We see this even in the Bible. For instance, in Nehemiah 8, Ezra calls for the book of the law, the Word of God, and reads it before the people and it prompts their repentance.

Remember, they were crying because they were hearing the Word of God for the first time in ages. And they were repenting and were committed to returning to God's Word.

The Reformation was launched by a similar renewed commitment to the authority of God's Word in His church. Scripture speaks to its own authority and sufficiently and sternly warns anyone who would seek to add or take away from the Word of God.

As we read in Revelation 22, I'll read it again, 18 and 19. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

And if anyone takes away from the words of this book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book. So, the Word of God is not to be subject to our thoughts, our opinions, and our feelings.

[13:15] It must not be added to or subtracted from or otherwise edited by us in any way. Imagine the impact that a renewed commitment to Scripture's authority and sufficiency that it would have on the church today.

It would silence the men and women who presume to sit in judgment over God's Word. It would put an end to sermon series tied to Harry Potter and wrestling matches between staff and church parking lots.

An emphasis on sola scriptura would be a blow to false teachings and cults that claim to have received new and personal revelations from God. John MacArthur said, Virtually every sub-Christian cult has been founded by someone claiming to have heard directly from God.

Almost no idea has left more destruction in its wake. But belief in ongoing revelation has become a hallmark of the charismatic movement and the far reach of its influence has sown into the church an appetite for fresh words from God, creating a global epidemic of professing Christians who believe the Bible isn't enough.

So, if you watch most, if not all, of the preachers who appear on TBN today, you'll notice that they begin a lot of their statements and their messages by saying something like, well, the Lord told me this, or He showed me that.

[14:42] All the while, they're doing this, their Bible is either not present, or it's on their podium or their pulpit or whatever, and it's hardly being touched or referred to at all.

Another quote from John MacArthur, he says, Any practice that encourages believers to look inward for answers rather than to God and His Word is nothing more than repackaged Eastern mysticism in the guise of devotion to the Lord.

In spite of the biblical language it invokes, it eagerly substitutes subjective impressions and personal feelings for biblical truth. A renewed commitment to sola scriptura would silence those who claim to speak for God and those who sit in judgment over it.

It would guard the church from the influence of those determined to mix biblical truth with worldly wisdom. A renewed commitment to the authority and sufficiency and the clarity of Scripture is the starting place to purge the church of many of its impurities and provide sufficient protection from Satan's corrupting influence.

Also, it would result, I believe, in more Christians reading their Bibles. If we put so much emphasis, as we should, on the Word of God, I believe that it would hopefully result in more Christians going to their Bibles.

[16:00] I put a quote on Facebook. I don't know who said it, but basically the point of it was if you want to hear from... So many Christians want to hear from God yet their Bibles sit closed.

If you want to hear from God... I can't remember who said it, even John MacArthur, like Spurgeon, maybe. If you want to hear God's voice, then pick up your Bible and read it out loud. I think it would. I think that more Christians would read their Bible. I have a pastor friend now. I'm not... You know, a lot of times when you hear a preacher or pastor preaching and he talks about a good friend of mine, he's really referring to himself, you know.

I'm not doing that here, just so you know. This is a real pastor friend of mine. And he talked to me about a struggle that he's having with leaders in his church because they're not...

Yeah. Because they're not reading their Bibles. And so his position that he's wanting to take is founded in Scripture, but they're not going along with him because their opinions are their opinions and because they're not reading the Word of God.

[17:11] They don't see or understand where he's coming from, you know. And that's a problem. Whenever our own church leaders don't read their Bibles and there's disagreement in the church concerning things that there shouldn't be any kind of disagreement on, people in the church need to read their Bibles more than they do.

So, sola scriptura. Scripture alone. Second, sola fide. Faith alone. Faith alone. Justification by faith alone is the heart of the Gospel.

Rejecting this truth results in a salvation that is based on works. Good works play no part in delivering a sinner from the penalty that their sin deserves.

In Romans 4, verses 5 and 8, the Apostle Paul explains that the sinner's only hope of salvation is found not in his own righteousness, but in the righteousness that comes by faith alone.

Let me read that passage to you. And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works.

[18:25] Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Faith alone is the means by which anyone has ever been made right with God.

Israel's sacrificial system had no capacity to save sinners. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord told His people, I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.

Faith was always the basis of God's redemptive plan. Abraham, who was the patriarch of the Jewish people, was not saved by his good works, but because, the Bible says, he believed the Lord and he counted it to Him as righteousness.

The New Testament authors repeatedly quote this verse in defense of justification by faith alone. Romans 4.9 says, In this blessing, then only is this blessing, I should say, only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised.

For we say, that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. Galatians 3.6, Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

[19:41] James 2.23, And the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God. So we understand that good works did not save Abraham nor are they able to save anyone else.

And in fact, this is what makes Christianity different from all other religions of the world. The common thread shared between Catholicism and Buddhism and Hinduism and Mormonism and Islam and all the rest is a shared focus of justification by human achievement.

In all of those different faith systems, man is responsible to do good works that result in his own salvation. In Christianity, that is not the case.

But if salvation is by grace, Paul says, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. Romans 11.6, Only biblical Christianity teaches that the justification of the sinner is an exclusively divine accomplishment by faith alone.

To God, He gets the glory alone, right? And we'll get there in just a minute. Sola gratia, grace alone. Grace alone. Scripture makes clear that justification is not only through faith alone, but given by divine grace alone.

[21 : 16] Catholics point to their own rituals as the means of salvation while other prideful people take credit for their own salvation. However, the doctrine of sola gratia destroys all notions of salvation by any cause other than the glorious grace of God alone.

This is the point that Paul makes in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Sinners have earned and only deserve the wrath of God poured out against their willful rebellion against Him.

All stand fully and equally guilty before Him. Romans 3.23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In Galatians 3.10 Paul says, For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

[22 : 24] Romans 9.16 says that our salvation depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. Titus 3.5 says that God saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

So taking all of this into consideration, we see that it's because of our unworthiness that God's saving grace is so amazing. In spite of our sinfulness, He graciously grants us faith, washes us in the blood of His Son, and then cloaks us with His perfect righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5.21 For our sake He made Him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. So God imputed our sinfulness to Christ who in His death on the cross had all of our sins laid on Him by His Father so that He paid in full the penalty that was due to us.

He now imputes the infinitely perfect righteousness of Christ to the account of each believer all solely as a function of His infinite grace.

We do not deserve to receive this. That's why it's called grace. If we deserved it, it wouldn't be.

However, many churches and pastors today seem convinced that God's Word and His grace aren't sufficient to seal the deal with seekers.

[23 : 54] People who come into the church, you know, maybe they're interested in church but they're unsaved. They depend more upon their own cleverness, more upon their own talents to try to convince them that they need Jesus.

A firm commitment to sola gratia would shift the focus of church away from how it markets itself to the world and unto the only means of true faith which is repentance and the power of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit.

And so now I'm going to go on a little bit of a rant and I don't know if this is the place to do it. Not really a rant but maybe more of like venting. I get really tired of seeing this kind of stuff. You know, there's just all of these appeals to make the church kind of like a place of entertainment but sort of silly too.

You know, like one of the things that I'm really, I don't like seeing and you could disagree with me and that's fine. I still love you and I hope you still love me too but I'm tired of church photo booths. Do you guys know what I'm talking about?

The different photo booths that they set up outside and maybe they'll do them on different days like Mother's Day or Father's Day and you take a picture with your family and stuff like that and you know, they have a big background and everything and you know, part of me is just like I understand it and that's okay.

[25:14] I mean, it's not like it's, there's anything about the Bible that says that you shouldn't do it and I kind of get it and you know, and again, on Easter and on those days like we have families come up here and take pictures and I'm totally for that but I just think it's just so inauthentic to me.

That's what bothers me is the inauthenticity of it and the thinking about, you know, like all the plan that goes into putting something like that together and it's like why aren't they thinking about other things in the service more?

Why aren't they focused more on the worship of Jesus Christ during that time of worship? And it just seems like, you know, there's one person that's their whole job, that whole week is to prepare that booth and I just think it's a waste of time and there's other things that churches do that just, they make things seem silly.

Another thing that bothers me and I know I've talked to Willard about this too is the announcement videos that get played during the time of worship and you know, listen, there's, like humor has a place for sure.

I mean, I don't want everything to be dark and dreary and we come in here and we act like Jesus never resurrected. Like I don't want that. There is a place for humor and certainly, you know, in preaching and different things that we do, there's a place for that and there's a right way to do it but to try to find a way to bring it in through a lot of those different videos and stuff and make lighthearted of things.

[26:41] I mean, again, I'm not like a grouchy, grumpy person but I just feel like there are some things that just shouldn't take place in church like other things like mother, son, ninja, nerf nights and different things like that.

I don't know. I mean, part of me is just like I understand it and if somebody in the church really wanted to do it, I wouldn't be, no, we're not going to do it. But I just think, what are we spending our time doing?

And do we, when people come in here and they're unbelievers, what do they see from us? I mean, it's serious when we come together for the worship of God and it is a serious time.

Yes, there is, there is, I think Jesus used humor when he's talking about, you know, looking at the speck in your brother's eye and you've got a plank sticking out of your own eye and there's a place for that.

But I think that, you know, we've got to be careful that whatever we do here is genuine and it's authentic and ultimately our number one focus is the worship of Jesus Christ. We don't want to take anything away from that.

[27:45] You know, and if we are, you know, we've been driving home the gospel to the people who are here and then I just feel like it all gets ruined at the end if then we're throwing all these different, like, fun things at them to do or to laugh at and then, you know, they really need to think about what they've just heard.

So that's just kind of the way I feel. But I could change my mind. I don't think that I will. Okay.

Now we're going to go out of order a little bit here. Salve Deo Gloria. Glory to God alone.

When I got to go to Latvia, you know those three old buildings, Dan? Were they the little sisters or the little brothers? Did they call them something like that?

Yeah. So they had these three really old buildings, like the oldest buildings in town and it's an old town with a lot of old things in it. And one of the buildings I remember was one of those old buildings and carved in stone above the front door was Salve Deo Gloria and none of the other people on the trip, our guide didn't know what that meant.

[29:01] And it was just an apartment house at that point in time but I was really curious like what, you know, what was this originally used for or whoever's house, you know, that was really important to them.

The glory of God alone, I just thought it was really neat. But it's not something, I think it's, you know, a lot of us don't take it into consideration anymore. Unfortunately, that all that we do should be for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. And I wonder, you know, hopefully, hopefully because you guys go to this church, you've heard a lot about the glory of God when you come here.

But have you noticed maybe with your other Christian friends or other churches that maybe you visited that there doesn't seem to be a lot of focus on the glory of God or a lot of talk about the glory

of God?

Much of the focus is on how God is more interested in your happiness, more how God is interested in your own personal fulfillment and satisfaction than He cares about His own glory.

[30:09] The God spoken of in many sermons today is little more than a genie eager to grant your every wish. But the trick is that you have to say the magic words, right?

You have to say them in just the right way, in just the right order, with enough faith in order for them to come true, in order for your wishes to be granted. Another lengthy quote here by John MacArthur says, One of Satan's favorite and most effective strategies is to disguise narcissism with a pious but tawdry facade.

Clearly, the deception is working. Many churches are offering not what God seeks but what is natural to the depraved sinner, His own fulfilled desires. When preachers offer health, wealth, fulfillment, or satisfaction, the sinner is made sovereign.

His will must be done or he won't join. As a result, rampaging pride and selfishness have infected the church at every level. In the pews, men and women expect God to give them what they desire, fulfilling all their fantasies as He pours out endless blessing and favor because He loves them so unconditionally and is so happy they finally like Him.

And he concludes by saying, Pastors and church leaders compound the problem by living opulent lifestyles that they excuse as proof of God's hearty approval of their ministries.

[31:36] I saw Kenneth Copeland, I don't know if you watched this recent interview, I can't remember who the reporter was, but she stopped him and he was getting into his, you know, his big fancy SUV and he wasn't driving, of course, he has his own driver.

And he was in his, his air, I think he was in his own airport or, I can't remember, but the conversation was about the new jet that he had purchased, you know, millions of dollars and the lady was like, you know, do you feel bad at all for, you know, you have these jets, you have these houses, you have these properties and, you know, people who listen to you are suffering and they don't have nearly as much and his whole point was, well, I have these things because, you know, as evidence that God is, yeah, favoring me, I have the favor of God and of course I have all of these different things.

I think that he's in for a rude awakening one of these days. God's glory should be the dominating concern of every believer.

Our thoughts should be more centered around the question of how can I give glory to God in this?

How can I give glory to God in how I parent my children, my grandchildren?

How can I give glory to God in my service to Him and in His church? How can I give glory to God by serving other people?

[33:05] How can I give glory to God in my workplace? How can I give glory to God in my neighborhood? How can I give glory to God when I'm coaching my children's sports teams?

And we must resist the temptation to want to make everything about ourselves. Because the purpose for which we exist is to give God glory.

Do we understand that? That's why we're here. It's the purpose of every single one of our existence is to glorify God. And here's the thing, a lot of people don't like that.

A lot of people are repulsed by that. And if that's the case, then I would say that Christ is truly not the center of your life and He's certainly not your emphasis. And He's not your focus.

That's a major problem. So again, most lists of the solas conclude with this one because the emphasis of our being is to glorify God and that was foundational to the Reformation.

[34:06] But we are going to end with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. And so lastly, solus Christus. Christ alone. Salvation is available in Christ alone.

Now that is not a popular truth these days. And in fact, it's never been very popular. But increasingly so in our society, no one wants to hear about the exclusivity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even some who call themselves Christians find that message off-putting. There's a lot of fear in the church today of offending sinners. It's offensive to tell people that they'll spend eternity in hell.

They want to find room in the plan of redemption to sneak people into the back door of heaven somehow. However, as Jesus said, entered by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many.

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few. If the church can't hold fast to the truth about Christ that there is only one mediator also between God and

man and that man Christ Jesus that there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved then there is no light to bring to this world that is blinded by sin.

[35 : 32] If you do not explain that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation then you have not rightly shared the Gospel. In fact, you have shared a different Gospel.

So we must be careful. Okay. So, what can we as a church do, right? You know, we think that the task is great and we are few.

What can we do as a church? Well, we do these things and we hold each other accountable to these things. You know, here, the authority of Scripture is going to come before anybody's thoughts or opinions no matter who that person is whether they're the pastor or somebody else.

We are going to be committed to sharing the Gospel and explaining to people that you are saved by faith alone through Christ alone.

And all that we do we are going to give glory to God. We are going to seek and hope to do that.

Everything that we do, the different engage events that we do, the different things that we support with the Gospel debt, the studies that we do on Sunday night, the things that we teach in Sunday school and whatnot, everything we do.

[36 : 47] When we meet for choir and practice and when the choir sings, when we go out and play softball, and all you softball players, we're doing it because we want to give God glory ultimately, though it's fun to win.

And then, finally, everything is about Jesus Christ here, right? We are making sure that He is our focus and we're calling others to keep Him the focus as well. And so, it's about His Word and it's about us making sure that we are being committed and helping others to be committed to following Him and walking in His ways.

And God will do great things through that and hopefully, we pray that other churches will follow suit as well. It's definitely needed and so, I encourage you to think over these things and be thinking more about what can I do today in this situation to bring glory to God and you'd be amazed and well pleased with what He will have you to do for His name.