

***Reformation Sunday***

Eph 2:8

Title: Reformation - The three great Solas

500 years ago, the Christian church went through a massive renewal, called the Reformation. Before the reformation, a young monk by the name of Martin Luther worried about his salvation. He was constantly worried whether God was really going to let him into heaven. In Martin's time, it was understood that you had to work to get to Heaven. Whatever sins you didn't work off here on Earth... well, those were paid for by a few millennia suffering in purgatory. Luther tried to do all the right things. But he wasn't happy. He was never in peace about his salvation. In all these things that he did, Luther realized he was not perfect. The more he worked on paying for his sins, the more sins he found. For every sin he confessed, he found 10 more hiding underneath. Take the sin of pride, for example... I try to get rid of my pride by being humble. But the problem is that when I find myself being successful at being humble. I suddenly find myself feeling pride about being humble. God must be really pleased with me that I am humble. As a result of this, knowing how unable we were to be sinless, instead of being happy about being a Christian, Martin Luther hated it. In his Christian walk, all he ever experienced was failure, doubt, anxiety. He realized that he could never be sure he had done enough to make it into Heaven.

Now, the Bible tells us why this happens. The root of the problem is Sin. In particular, it stems from something we call "Original Sin." There is two types of sin sins from acts we do and Original sin. The sins of action are "the bad things we do" when we disobey God, when we break the 10 commandments, etc. We make choices to do these sins. We can confess them and feel forgiven. And all is well. However, "Original sin" is the most insidious. This is the one which drove Luther crazy. Original sin is the sin all humans have inherited from Adam and Eve. Original sin is the sin that all humans have at birth. It is not the sins which we do. It is the corruption of sin in the human body and mind and spirit.

Let me give you an example of original sin. Many people believe that, at birth, babies have not had any time to do any sins. Therefore at birth, they have no need of forgiveness. Now, this would be true if all sin were just sins of action. However, I ask a question of those of you who have experience with babies. Who is the center of the baby's world? Now, some say "the mother." I say, the mother is the slave. She is there to satisfy the baby's needs for food, warmth and love. In reality, the center of the baby's universe, is "The Baby." The baby assumes

everyone is here to satisfy its needs. It is blind to the real center of the universe. They are blind to the real center -who is God.

That blindness is the result of Original Sin. That blindness is the result of the corruption of original sin. It is why we cannot follow the ten commandments perfectly. Because of our blindness to God, we see the Ten commandments as something which binds us, because it does not serve us. What we fail to see is that the Ten Commandments revolve around God, who is the true center of the universe. In the beginning this was not so. Mankind was created in the perfect image of God. However, at the fall of Adam and Eve that perfect image was corrupted, and Original Sin entered the world. That's the sin which we cannot get rid of, no matter how hard we try.

Luther was struggling with Original Sin. Luther had to come face-to-face with the reality that God is perfect, and we are not. And that perfection cannot live with imperfection. The sinless cannot abide with the sinful. And as a result he concluded therefore, that because our very nature was corrupted. because our very nature was sinful, God could not abide with us. God could not love us. By our very nature, we were separated from God. forever... Because of our sinful nature, were worthy of death, eternal death and Hell. This realization drove Luther almost to despair. I can't do enough to make up for what I am. I am doomed.

But just when Luther started to give up, God led him to the true meaning of the Gospel God said... Yes, you are not perfect. Yes, you are sinful, and worthy of death, eternal death. But there is good news. Someone has come up and said "I will be righteous for you," Not only that but he said "I will die on the cross," "I will go to the executioner and I will die in your place." "I will pay for your sins, so that you can go free. The person who said that was Jesus. Jesus! Jesus has accomplished it all. Jesus has paid the penalty which our sin (original sin and all) demanded. And Jesus has freed us. Jesus has saved us. And that salvation... comes to us free. That salvation comes to us as a gift.

That was the Reformation, the realization that salvation was a gift given to us by God. Last week I told you about the three Latin sayings the three great "SOLAS" Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura (Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone). These three sayings came out of the Reformation, in answer to the questions... What do I have to do to get to heaven? How can I be sure? If you, like Martin Luther, wonder about your salvation, if you wonder if God loves you, if you wonder if God cares about what happens to you... then the three SOLAS are for you.

Sola Gratia - Grace alone. Sola Fide - Faith alone. Sola Scriptura - Scripture alone. Grace alone was the answer to the question What do I have to do to get to heaven? Grace means “gift” Sola Gratia meant that your ability to get to heaven was a gift. There was nothing you could do that was good enough for you to be worthy of heaven. Your ability to get to heaven was totally a gift a gift from God. Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. So, the question comes up... “If there is nothing I DO to get to heaven, then how do I get the gift of heaven?” The second SOLA, Sola Fide, answers that question. Sola Fide, “faith alone,” told us that You get the gift of heaven by faith. by simply believing in Jesus. Believing in Jesus... not just with your mind but with your heart... Trusting Jesus trusting in his promises, trusting that He was the way, the truth and life. That is what connects you to God. That is what makes you a child of God. So, getting to heaven is a gift. I receive that gift by faith, by believing in Jesus. But how do I know if this is right? How do I know that these promises are true? How can I be sure? This leads us to the third SOLA “Sola Scriptura - Scripture alone”. Sola Scriptura said that you can be assured that the promises are true because God told them to you. He told them to you in the Bible. John 3:16 God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believed in him shall not perish but have eternal life. No other source of information is needed. The wonderful message of the reformation... Sola Gratia (grace alone) Sola Fide (faith alone) Sola Scriptura (scripture alone) tells you that God has come down and given you a great gift... God has given his son, Jesus for you. You are now a child of God.

Now, this is not the end. There are many people in our local community, who are still asking the question: “What do I have to do to get to heaven?” They need to know the three great Solas. God is calling us to befriend someone who does not know Jesus. Be a safe place for them where they can ask the questions

What do I have to do to get to heaven?  
 If it is not by my works then how do I get to heaven?  
 How do I know it is true?

You know the answer.  
 Tell them!