

Reformation Faith

Sermon October 31, 2021

Scripture Reading: Galatians 3:6-11

Golden Verse: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Today the Protestant world celebrates **Reformation Sunday**.

1. What do we celebrate on Reformation Sunday?

During the centuries, there were many church doctrines created. Around the 15th and 16th centuries, some ministers realized that many doctrines were false and against the Bible. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they wanted to restore the followers to Jesus Christ who said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

These people, who made strong efforts to return to the well, are called reformers.

The word Reformation means renewal, restoration, to re-shape something to the original.

These significant restorations were made by Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, John Knox, and others, influenced and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Today, we give thanks to those leaders, who reformed the church by returning to the Bible, who taught us God's way based on the Scripture.

2. Why do we celebrate the Reformation Sunday on October 31st?

In 1517, Martin Luther from Germany started to reform the Christian Church, a transformation based on the Bible according to God's teaching. He formulated 95 theses, in which he highlighted the contradictions between the church doctrines and the Bible. On October 31, 1517, he made his 95 theses known to all his parishioners and all his students, posting his manuscript at the doors of his church. This was a very significant day when the real reformation movements started in the Roman Catholic Church. Unfortunately, the Church did not want to recognize these truths. Those priests who recognized the truth started to preach according to Martin Luther's doctrines.

At the same time when Martin Luther was preaching in Germany, another priest in Geneva, Switzerland, John Calvin, discovered the discrepancies between what the church was teaching versus what the Bible was teaching. John Calvin was teaching at the Theological College in Geneva based on his new discoveries.

Years later, John Knox followed their footsteps in Scotland. Those congregations who adopted the revised theological teachings were called Reformed Churches or Protestant Churches. The word PROTESTANT came from PROTEST. These reformed churches were protesting against the unbiblical teachings and were labeled as PROTESTANT churches.

In Europe and in many countries in the world, Reformation Day – October 31- is a Statutory Holiday.

Dear beloved, I am asking you now to think about your own values. What do you value in your life and which one is your biggest value.

Would you say that your FAITH is one of your most cherished value?

What would you do in certain situations if you would not have faith?

How would you behave in a crisis if you would not have faith?

How would you resolve different conflicts if you would not have faith?

How would you face death if you would not have faith?

Let us focus today on FAITH and the importance of FAITH.

The Reformers made a strong statement that, for us, FAITH should be our most important value.

Christians often raise a very crucial question: on what basis is man declared by God to be justified? Is it by faith alone or by work or by faith combined with works?

Paul makes it clear in Galatians and Romans that man is *“justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law”* (Galatians 2:16), and the rest of the Bible concurs. They highlighted that to be accepted by God, to be allowed to inherit God’s Glory, Heaven, our FAITH is the most important. Not our work, not our heritage, not what we think about ourselves, but our FAITH will allow us into Heaven.

We are declared righteous, or justified by God, on the basis of our faith alone and not by works. This is a key doctrine of the Bible. Most religions and cults teach that we, as humans, have work to do to be saved.

The Bible teaches that we are not saved by our works, but by God’s grace through His gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Until all other religions based on human achievement, the Biblical Christianity is distinct from every other religion in that. The Bible is telling us what God has accomplished for us through Jesus Christ. Jesus finished his work for us on the cross to be saved.

Faith is the only way of salvation.

In Romans, Paul says: *“To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness”* (Romans 4:5).

The Bible teaches that those who trust Jesus Christ for justification by faith alone are imputed with His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21), while those who try to establish their own righteousness or mix faith with works will receive the punishment due to all who fall short of God’s perfect standard.

Some non-biblical teachings says that righteous works are meritorious towards salvation. Protestant theology affirms the biblical teaching that righteous works are the result and evidence of a born-again person who has been justified by God and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther highlighted we will go to heaven only because we have faith and believe in Christ Jesus and His salvation.

To make it simpler:

God said that He knew that no human can do enough good things in order to deserve the everlasting glory in God’s Kingdom. We all were born as sinners and, no matter how much we would do, we could not force God to enter us into his glory.

God so loved the world that He sent to us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin and cleansed us from our sin and, as a good shepherd, He shows us the way to Heaven. We do not deserve God’s love and grace but Jesus Christ bought for us the ticket to Heaven.

Jesus Christ is giving us his achievement as a gift and we just have to accept Him as a gift. If we believe, accept with faith that Jesus died for us on the cross, his blood will cleanse us. If we have faith to accept Him, we are saved. We do not have to do, and we cannot add, anything to what Jesus already paid for us. He completed His work for us on the cross.

We cannot say that Jesus Christ + my effort will take me to heaven. We inherit the heavenly kingdom only by Grace and only by Faith declared in the Bible.

BUT, if we receive something from somebody, we, as sensitive humans, should try to be thankful.

We have to do good things, in order to show God that we are thankful for what He did for us. We are not doing good things to get something from God, but because we already received so many things from God.

Jesus Christ died for us on the cross and this was the excellent way of saving us. Jesus Christ accomplished everything for us with His sweat, tears and His last drop of blood to take us to heaven. If we value Jesus Christ, we don't want to add something to what He did for us. We have to see him through the lenses of values. Not me, not my actions, only Jesus Christ. We have to embrace Jesus Christ as the greatest gift with faith. His grace will give us new values and blessings as success.

If we have faith, we can have more humility. Amen