

Spiritual Lessons and Legacies of the Protestant Reformation

By Rev (Dr) Jack Sin

Introduction

William Webster accurately assessed the spiritual concerns of our times.

"We live in a day when the gospel message is being relentlessly assaulted by two great enemies: legalism (or extremism) and antinomianism. These two errors have confused and deceived many, wreaking spiritual havoc throughout Evangelical Protestantism.

The sixteenth century witnessed one of the greatest revivals in church history: the Reformation. The Protestant Church was born out of a protest against the entrenched legalism of Roman Catholicism. The Reformers fearlessly preached the gospel bearing witness to the biblical message of the sufficiency of the work of Christ, the grace of God and the full and final authority of scripture. They brought the Church back to the essential and liberating message of justification by faith as defined by the word of God. Since the sixteenth century the Reformation gospel has been the standard of orthodoxy for Protestants. Today however, we find a new interest in Roman Catholicism or the charismatic movement from all places, conservative Protestantism, and a willingness to uncritically embrace the defective teachings of the world. This is due in part to the fractured nature of evangelicalism and to an antinomian emphasis which is becoming more and more prevalent in evangelical circles. This has sparked an ongoing debate within evangelicalism as to the nature of saving faith and the meaning of salvation. But there is a desperate need today for a clarification of the biblical gospel. We need to return to a fearless and uncompromising proclamation of the fullness of the truth of the gospel as revealed in scripture. This is what characterized the preaching and teaching of the Reformers. Their gospel message was founded on the ultimate authority of God's word and God blessed their efforts with an outpouring of his Spirit in great power and conversion. The answer for evangelicals who are concerned about the superficiality of evangelicalism and the state of the culture is not union with or tolerance of the legalistic or superficial gospel of today but a return to the biblical and Reformation gospel. **It is this gospel that much of evangelicalism has abandoned."**

(Edited from William Webster, *The Gospel of the Reformation, WA; Christian Resource, Inc, 1997, 12-13*)

This is aptly observed and analysed as the gospel of Christ is often discarded or substituted by other themes that are secondary to the cause of Christ and the saving of souls.

The Background to the Reformation

The Protestant Reformation movement was divinely timed in one of the most remarkable periods of European history. The taking of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in the middle of the fifteenth century had dispersed the literary treasures and the scholars of that rich and learned city all over Europe. Men began studying diligently the old Latin and Greek language, and they read the New Testament in the original languages in which it had been written and Western World was eager to be taught their ancient Hebrew tongue as they studied the Old Testament writings. A whole world of new thoughts in poetry, philosophy, and sacred literature was then opened before the men in Europe of the period which preceded the Reformation.

The discovery of America by Columbus in 1492 not only revolutionized trade and commercial enterprise, but fired the imagination of Europe. The Printing Press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1455 in Germany and the dissemination of reformation doctrine was sped up all over the European world. It was the dawning of a new era of learning and intellectual and spiritual knowledge grew with progress.

This era is commonly called the Renaissance which started in the middle of the 13th century preceding the Great Protestant Reformation was divinely timed of God.

A Revival of Religion and Nearness to God

Lindsay had said well,

"What stirs the hearts of men who are in the midst of a great religious movement of the Reformation within the Christian Church is the desire to get near to God, to feel in personal fellowship with that God who has revealed himself in his pardoning grace in the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Continued on Page 2...

When the revival of religion began in the sixteenth century, and when it had gone on for some time, men under its influence felt such barriers in their way. The church which called itself the door of entrance into God's presence had barred the road with its priesthood, with its sacramental system, with its wearisome round of prescribed 'good works' was dead.

The medieval Roman Church with its bankrupt and dead rituals was long overdue and rites could not satisfy the spiritual hunger of a genuinely seeking population. The Reformation had just begun and could not be stopped".

(T.M. Lindsay, *The Reformation, Edinburgh; Banner of Truth Trust, 2006, 215-217*)

These events prepared the people to receive one of the greatest awakenings of all times when the time was ripe. God sovereignly brought it about with His Almighty power through His anointed servants in the fullness of time.

There was a great transformation of hearts as the truths of the word of God penetrated hearts, nations, families and churches were quickened to the sanctifying power of the words of life.

Souls were regenerated, justified and sanctified by the powerful preaching of the cross where Christ died as a vicarious atonement for the elect of God (Rom 5:8-11, John 12:11).

Luther before the Diet of Worms

"My conscience is captive to the Word of God Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

These legendary words of Martin Luther's undaunted defense of biblical truths before the Diet of Worms in April 1521 that was chaired by King Charles V, the reigning Monarch of the Roman Catholic Empire and that he courageously refused to recant should still stir our hearts even today. Courage rising from biblical conviction led Luther to stand on Reformation principles that we still affirm today. Scripture is the sole authority for life and doctrine (*sola Scriptura*), faith (*sola Fide*) is the sole instrument of our union with Christ (*solus Christus*), and grace as the sole purpose and ground of our justification before God (*sola gratia*) and (*solus deo Gloria*) glory to God alone is our sole principle in life. These 5 solas were the foundation of a clear and convincing stand that not only led many in the Reformation times back to the Bible, but also led future generations into biblical faithfulness to God that transformed the world. When we see what God did with a faithful stand, we at MBPC should also believe strongly that no one should be subject to the fancies of another man or institution without the conviction of God's Holy Word, who alone is the absolute authority of our faith.

We should therefore continue to earnestly propagate the pure gospel of Christ and contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3,4).

Christ-Centered Reformation

We acknowledge that Christ-centered bible based instruction has not taken root in much of the liberal or neo evangelical world today. The Bible emphasizes the role of grace in motivating and enabling holiness, in life-renewing understanding of the gospel through a Christ-centered view of Scripture and life. This renewal comes when those who understand that their justification was based on their faith in Christ (Rom 1:17) and that they are eternally secure, held solely by the grace of God and not the works of man (Eph 2:8-9).

Resting on Christ's finished work and God's grace causes all of our perspectives and relationships to change. We learn to see ourselves as God sees us in Christ, as sinners saved by His sovereign grace. As a consequence, the joy of the Lord that is our strength floods into our lives to drive us to greater levels of Christian fervency, love, and commitment a warm and vivid manner that is the duty and privilege of every redeemed soul given in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20).

Reformed and Covenantal Heritage

The important foundations of the Reformation is the doctrine of justification by Faith, the universal priesthood of believers and the doctrine of election in salvation and the final perseverance of saints.

As a result of the English reformation which indirectly influenced the BP movement. We adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643 - 47) and Catechisms as our creed of the BP churches for it...

Continued on Page 3...

contains the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture. As a reformed church, we teach the historic reformed Westminster Confession of Faith with faithful adherence to it as it is based in God's Word. We also affirm with our confession that the final arbiter of all truth is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures (WCF 1.9-10). The Holy Spirit's call to communicate the significance of his Word is consistent with **the principles of our reformed heritage and the needs of our generation is always Semper Reformata, Semper Reformanda - always Reformed, always being Reformed.**

The consciousness of our constant dependence upon God's provision drives us to a covenantal perspective of our Reformation distinctive. The covenantal perspective reveals the sovereignty and glory of God in initiating and maintaining his sovereign rule over the world and His redemptive plan for His elect through the vicarious atonement of Christ (Mat 1:21, Eph 1:4). Out of his great power and love, he superintends all creation around us and thereby glorifies Christ. This confidence of his sovereign provision for every aspect of our salvation makes every sphere of life, family, church, and society subject to his rule. Because the Bible declares that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it we echo the same in our firm affirmation of the sovereignty of God in the Dutch Reformation especially at the Synod of Dort in theological response to the Remonstrants namely the 5 points of Calvinism that was propounded in the period from 1618 - 1619.

The following is a comparison of the five points of Calvinism and the five points of Arminianism arising out of the Dutch Remonstrance controversy at the historic Synod of Dort. The "Five Points" of Calvinism can be easily remembered by the acronym TULIP. (the Dutch flower) This material below is adapted from **The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended and Documented**, by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas. Philipburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963 (biblical references and quotes in parenthesis are added here by the writer).

<u>The "Five Points" of Arminianism</u>	<u>The "Five Points" of Calvinism</u>
<p>1. FreeWill or Human Ability</p> <p>Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.</p>	<p>1. Total Inability or Total Depravity</p> <p>Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not and cannot choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ. It takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation--it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God. (Gen 6:5, Jer 17:9, Jn 3:19, Mark 7:21-23, Eph 4:17-19, Rom 3:9-12, 1 Jn 1:8-10)</p>
<p>2. Conditional Election</p> <p>God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation.</p>	<p>2. Unconditional Election</p> <p>God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ.</p>

<p>God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>	<p>Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p> <p>(Jn 15;16, Eph 1;4,5, Deut 7:6,7, Rom 8:28-30, 1 Pet 1:1,2 Rev 17;14, Tit 1:1, Act 13;48,)</p>
<p>3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement</p> <p>Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.</p>	<p>3. Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption</p> <p>Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners (although it is particularly able to save the whole world) if God wills. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation. (The phrase by Augustine, Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect may be accepted here if properly understood)</p> <p>(Mt 1:21, 20:28, 26:28, Jn 10:11,17,20, 24-26, 11:50-53, Gal 1;3,4,Tit 2:14,Eph 5:25,26, Heb 9:28, Rev 5:9)</p>
<p>4. The Holy Spirit Can be Effectually Resisted</p> <p>The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.</p>	<p>4. Irresistible Grace or The Efficacious Call of the Spirit</p> <p>In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) and non-discriminational (ie the offer of the gospel) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.</p> <p>(John 6:37,44,64,65 Rom 8:14, 1 Cor 6:11,Eph 2:1,5, 2Tim 2:25,26, Heb 9:15, Phil 2:12,13)</p>
<p>5. Falling from Grace</p> <p>Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ--that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.</p>	<p>5. Perseverance of the Saints</p> <p>All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are (preserved) eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.</p> <p>(Isa 43;1-3, Matt18:12-14, Jn 10:27-30,Rom 8:35-39, Eph 1:5,13,17,lthes 5:23,24, Jude .24,25, 1Jn 2;19,25)</p>

REJECTED by the Synod of Dort

This was the system of thought contained in the "Remonstrance" (though the "five points" were not originally arranged in this order). It was submitted by the Arminians to the Church of Holland in 1610 for adoption but was rejected by the Synod of Dort in 1619 on the ground that it was unscriptural.

REAFFIRMED by the Synod of Dort

This system of theology was reaffirmed by the Synod of Dort in 1619 as the doctrine of salvation contained in the Holy Scriptures. The reformed church at that time formulated the response into "five points" (in answer to the five points submitted by the Arminians) and has ever since been known as the "five points of Calvinism."

These succinct doctrinal statements came to summarily represent what is the Reformed Faith till today.

The Doctrinal Convictions of the Reformers

The Reformers bequeathed upon us rich and precious lessons and legacies that we ought not to forget and ignore but to pass it down to succeeding generations.

The theology of Luther exemplified in his study was exegetical, being propounded by the method of letting individual biblical texts talk which is a precursor to inductive bible study today. It was evangelical, being a sustained assertion of the gospel of God's grace to sinners; and it was polemical, firing in turn at Roman superstition, radical Protestant "enthusiasm", and the folly and futility of the ways of this sinful world. It represented essentially a rediscovery of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and His Word. Luther and Calvin asserted God's active sovereignty in providence and grace with tremendous vigour. All created things are God's "marks" behind all that happens with such symmetry and beauty in this world of sight and sense is the hidden face, the guiding hand, the ruling mind, of its Maker. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther wrote against Erasmus' wrong understanding of man in his book on Freewill. Luther wrote correctly of the truth of man's absolute enslavement by our fallen nature to sin and Satan and his consequent absolute dependence on God's sovereign divine grace for salvation. These are the "hinges" on which the whole theological system of the Reformation really us.

The doctrine of the Church, Christ, Sin, God and Man were biblically expounded during these times by the reformers especially Calvin. One of the reformers' aims was to inculcate the doctrine of the final and sufficient bible as the basis for the true knowledge of God, and to this end he constantly emphasized and taught biblical themes with great precision.

The reformers affirmed the absolute Authority of the Word of God against the practice of appealing to church traditions, Papal pronouncements, canon law, and the trivial sophistries of saints. The latter have the effect of gagging the Scriptures, so that the true voice cannot be heard. The reformers account of the Scriptures was that the Bible is God inspired (2 Tim 3:16-17) and the authoritative book for the Holy Ghost is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth. Luther's, Calvin's and Knox's evangelical enlightenment and subsequent accurate exposition of the word led to a great awakening in Europe that changed the spiritual landscape of Germany, England, Scotland, Holland and other European countries as well.

The authoritative, perspicuous and sufficient Word of God was to be preached, received meditated and taught biblically and practically to the nurture and the building up of the faith of saints in God without spiritual compromise or falsehood.

Remember Paul in 1 Th 2:13 says, *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"*. The people received the word with all gladness as truth from God.

Believers should do the same today whenever we heard the word preached to us with fear and trembling.

The Gospel of the Reformation

The basic thrust of the reformation was the preaching of the glorious gospel of Christ by all Reformers. Paul in 1 Cor 9:16 says, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" It is transformation and renewal of the inner being where love for self is displaced Christ and our need for God. Paul in Phil1:27 says, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of..."

Continued on Page 6...

your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" The concern for the advancement of God's kingdom with the unashamed and authoritative declaration of the pure gospel of Christ to the saving of souls with the defend of the saints should be the primary preoccupation of every Christ honouring church.

The Soteriology of the Reformers

On another note, it is instructive to know that the reformation teaching on salvation is often misrepresented or misunderstood by these who charge that the Reformers taught that men could be justified yet go on living in sin. This is not only a spurious charge that has no basis at all. Reformed theology, the term regeneration has been chosen to designate the initial act that act in which God alone is active, while conversion is frequently used to designate the logically subsequent phase in which the person is active as a result of the grace which the person's consciousness is engaged in the exercise of faith and repentance of sins. Paul in Tit 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;". Regeneration is a change wrought by the Spirit in order that the person may savingly respond to the summons, or demand of the call, embodied in the gospel call. The comments from the following Reformers demonstrate this fact :

John Calvin (the French Reformer)

To prove the first point that God justifies not only by pardon and by regeneration. He (Osiander) asks whether God leaves as they were by nature those whom he justifies, changing none of their vices. This is exceedingly easy to answer; as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable - namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15), by whose is power he remarks them to his own image ... The grace of justification is not separated from regeneration, although they are things distinct.

Huldrych Zwingli (the Reformer of Switzerland)

When, therefore, Divine Majesty formed the plan of redeeming man, it did not intend that the world should persist and become inveterate in its wickedness. For if this had been the plan, it would have been better never to have sent a redeemer than to have sent one under such conditions that after redemption there should be no change from our former diseased state. It would have been laughable if He to whom everything that is ever to be is seen as present had determined to deliver man at so great a cost, and yet had intended to allow him to immediately after his deliverance to wallow in his old sins. He proclaims, therefore, at the start, that our lives and characters must be changed. For to be a Christian is nothing less than to be a new man and a new creature (2 Cor 5:17)." (Lindsay, *Reformation* 108-109)

Hence, we can see a vital principle in the church today. The proper teaching of the doctrine of salvation during the Reformation is the fundamental bedrock of the reformation movement today (ie vis a vis the Alpha course and social gospel).

John Knox of Scotland

Another notable 16th century Reformer was John Knox (1514 - 1572) of Scotland was ordained of heaven to spiritually awaken and revive the Kirk for an extraordinary transformation in the national reformation of Scotland. He was trained in Geneva College under Calvin and was used of God by his fiery preaching to initiate and rekindle the Protestant cause in a predominantly Roman Catholic environment under Queen Mary. Scotland was never the same again and many reformed churches in Scotland were started largely because of him.

In God's providence after almost 3 decades of preaching and teaching, when Knox died in 1572, the Reformed Churches was already firmly established in Scotland and the Scottish Confession was adopted in 1560. The principles of the Christian faith had been learned in innumerable Scottish homes. Andrew Melville would continue these principles and persevered with the revival of the Kirk. To a remarkable extent, the Church was independent of the State and self-governing. The parliament had condemned Roman Mass rendering it illegal and the relics, rituals, auricular confession to priests and idols were removed. Though Knox looked to the magistrates to enforce punishments for certain offences, he succeeded in doing by God's will at the time without it being a state church.

The fact is clear that John Knox a preacher defied the Queen Mary, a Roman Catholic monarch and had been used as the instrument under God, of a great work of national reformation, in some respects it is...

Continued on Page 7...

greater and more potent than that which had come to England, a reformation which included a tremendously strong strain of Puritanism which continues to influence the churches in England later in the 17th - 19th century.

Ecclesiastical Changes

Though the reformers were no statesmen, the ecclesiastical reorganizations of the Protestant churches that took place under their general guidance were God-sanctioned and appropriate models of what reformed churches should be today. The Presbyterian form of church governance in our churches today is one such example besides others like reformed worship and family covenant life. Yet there are valuable lessons of great interest that Calvin / Knox can teach us. Among them are the following :

1. The necessity of a Spirit led reformation within the Churches.
2. The nature of reformation in the spiritual renewal of the hearts wrought by the preaching of the Word of God.
3. The need for biblical separation from falsehood and unedifying alliances.
4. The proper governance of the church with elected elders (including pastors) and deacons and commitment from its members with church discipline.
5. The biblical and pastoral purpose must govern church reorganization. Good church order is not an end in itself, but must be thought of as a means to the well-being of souls by inducing fellowship, edification, and holiness.
6. The primary means of preaching and teaching the Word of God as the means to reformation. The emphasis was laid on teaching, by catechisms, sermons, books, and schools. This emphasis on Christian education and biblical instruction was itself epoch-making at that time.
7. Patience and prayer are needed by those who seek through reformation by the teaching the Word while doing our part as well.
8. The reformation of worship to be a Christ centred, God honouring. Word based worship service where the word of God is given preeminence and not emotions, entertainment or rituals.
9. The proper biblical doctrine and practice of the 2 sacraments (and not 7) namely baptism and Lord's Supper to the edifying of the saints.
10. The teaching of the covenant family life with the Godly upbringing and nurture of covenant children in the fear of God.
11. Universal education through the instruction of the Word to the people of God as supported by the church.
12. The translation of the bible into the vernacular languages of the common people.

The Application of the Reformed Doctrines to the Believer

What the Reformation stood for 491 years ago is true, relevant and vital today as it was then. Justification by faith alone as the basis of salvation and the absolute authority of the unchanging Scripture as God's inspired and providentially preserved Word. The gospel is sovereignly preserved by God and does not change from age to age; it will never be surpassed nor out-dated, nor will there be a new message that outstrips the everlasting gospel of Christ in importance.

The Reformation is no historical curiosity or anachronism but a living, on-going reality, because of the unadulterated gospel of grace it preached, as compared to the false and truncated gospels of our times (i.e. the 'Passion of the Christ', the 'Alpha Course' and the subtle half truths of the Da Vinci Code) which is often ecumenical or charismatic in nature and that is devoid of true evangelical repentance required of our Lord. What practical, urgent and relevant conclusions for the church and for the believers, can we come to, from this understanding of the Reformation?

The first is that the Roman Catholic Church has not changed at all in its doctrinal beliefs from the time in the 16th Century of Luther and the Reformation. The Reformation was about salvation by God's grace in Jesus Christ alone! It was about Scripture, as the only authority in the church. **The second is that the spiritual condition of so-called Protestantism is to a large extent deplorable.** Much of Protestantism is silent concerning the truths of the Reformation in its preaching and confession, and some even opposes and denies these biblical truths.

Continued on Page 8...

1. **Much of Protestantism today is ignorant of the Scriptures as the Roman church was at the time of the Reformation.** It implicitly sets aside Scripture as the basis of our faith and life by its acceptance of evolution or theistic evolution and its teaching of secular psychology and the approval of it renders its judgment on the ethical questions of our day suspect. In the areas of capital punishment, civil disobedience, abortion, and sexual immorality, cloning and euthanasia - it is relying instead on science, prevailing social opinions, and man's reason rather than the veritable and indestructible word of God. **Knowledge of God and his word is important and this is where we are to make a conscious effort to meditate on the Word and do it and to teach it well** (Ezra 7:10).
2. Much of Protestantism is one with Rome (and other faiths) in making salvation dependent upon man today. It boldly proclaims the free will of man and not the total dependence on God in salvation. It thereby denies total depravity, gracious election, and the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's work. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther wrote that the issue of the enslaved human will was the fundamental issue of the Reformation..."
3. **Much of Protestantism no longer bothers to preach and teach the pure gospel and the sole authority, inerrancy, sufficiency and perspicuity of the Scriptures.** Sermons are moralistic little stories or some favourite themes pandering to the likes and fancies of man. The heart of the Reformation and the 95 theses was expressed in Thesis 62: "The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." We need to bring the gospel to the people **and the Reformation stands for biblical evangelism and gospel missions to a lost and fallen world.** John Calvin sent out a mission team to Spain in the mid 16th Century. Although it did not bear forth much discernible fruit, nonetheless, it showed the missionary zeal and heart beat of the reformers in the saving of souls and the zeal for gospel missions.

Current Trends and Concerns

Protestantism today is probably quite similar to the Pre-Reformation times. The profound ignorance, superstition, spiritual idolatry, (i.e. worship of self, money, work, leisure, man made images and icons) and the obsession with the quest for health and pleasure or terror of man (i.e. terrorism) rather than the fear of God apply to us today.

But what must our response be to the Reformation, to those who love Christ and the truths of the God's word taught during and after the Reformation? There ought to be a personal response. The Reformation concerned the individual in a most direct and practical way. Its truth was personal; it had to do with the question each asks for himself: How can a depraved and guilty sinner be declared righteous before a thrice holy God? The Reformation arose in a personal way, as Luther himself struggled with utmost anxiety over that question. The Reformation intended to give peace that only the gospel of grace can give to every repentant sinner. The Reformation does concern every man and the question, "How can I a sinner be righteous before God?" being the most pressing one.

Conclusion

The 16th Century Protestant Reformation, was arguably the greatest revival of true religion energized by the yearning to get near to God, with sorrow, confession of sin and to obtain pardon and acceptance at his footstool through the free sovereign grace of God. These profound spiritual insights were valuable lessons and legacies which the Reformers bequeath upon their followers through the Word of God.

The 16th century Protestant movement blossomed on all sides into a full-fledged Reformation theology, founded on the biblical doctrines of salvation, God, man, sin and Christ based on the Word of God inspired by Holy Ghost took centred stage including the teaching of the universal priesthood of believers conferred by God through Christ our Redeemer and Mediator.

We are living in the perilous and precarious last days of religious persecution, ecclesiastical deception of falling away, occultic (ie Halloween) and cultic invasion, ecumenical compromise and religious extremism as well. There is a urgent call for godly discernment, spiritual diligence and discipline to be properly taught and to defend the truth these days. Satan will do all he can to distract or derail us if possible from the evangelical focus and Christ honouring duties of the church. We are to be prudent and alert and work laboriously while it is still day and trust our sovereign God who will triumph in the end in His second coming for His own glory and the eternal redemption of His chosen people.