

## CRC Devotional Guide for Fall 2017

### **A devotional guide to accompany our fall sermon series**

The following devotional is designed to assist our fall study of the Solas of the Reformation. We are encouraging everyone in the church to complete each short study prior to the respective sermon for that Sunday. This will not only better prepare you to hear the sermon, but also prime the pump for the Community Group discussion for that following week. This study is intended to be an aid not a requirement.

### **Book: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation***

In addition to reading biblical passages we are suggesting you read a short but dynamic book by Michael Reeves that gives some history and theology of the Reformation: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation*. These books will be available after church in the lobby for the next few weeks for \$3 (retail price on amazon.com is \$9). If for some reason, you cannot afford this, please do not hesitate to take a copy and pay whatever you are able, or nothing at all.

### **Why the Solas?**

One quick word about why we are doing this sermon series, “The Power of Freedom: Living in the Liberating Grace of Jesus . . . Alone!” Five hundred years ago this fall a movement of rediscovery began known historically as the Protestant Reformation. When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, a liberating power was unleashed as the biblical gospel was restored to the church. This movement set people free from crippling guilt and superstition, by restoring them to the liberty that is ours in Christ . . . and in him alone! “It was for freedom that Christ set us free” (Gal. 5:1)!

We will be working our way through the famous “solas” (i.e. “alones”) of the Reformation (i.e. Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, and to the glory of God alone), considering their relevance for us today. Perhaps no time since the Reformation have these doctrines been more needed. I’m convinced that you and your friends will be quite encouraged to learn what it means to live under the freedom of God’s Word, God’s Grace and God’s Glory . . . alone.

## **WEEK 1 - Why the Reformation?**

Complete for Sunday, September 17

READ: Romans 1:1-13

1. In verse 1 Paul says that he was “set apart for the gospel”. What does the word “gospel” mean?
2. List the characteristics that Paul goes on to attribute to the gospel and then state the significance of each.
3. In verse 3 Paul says that the gospel is “regarding his Son”. How does Paul go on to describe Jesus?
4. In vv. 6-7 Paul describes the recipients of his letter. List those descriptions and the significance of each.

READ: Romans 1:14-17

5. What does Paul mean by “the power of God that brings salvation”? How do people nowadays understand the idea of salvation? How does this compare and contrast with what Paul meant?
6. What is the significance of “everyone”(v. 16)? Paul seems to stress this. Why?

7. Paul says that “the righteousness of God is revealed” in the gospel. What does he mean by “righteousness”. What do you think he means that this righteousness is “by faith from first to last”?
  
8. Paul seems to be suggesting that this gospel of “righteousness by faith” is a revolutionary idea. How so? What difference does this make?

READ: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation* pp. 2-5.

## **WEEK 2 - Sola Gratia: Grace Alone**

Complete for Sunday, September 24

READ: Ephesians 2:1-10

1. What do you think Paul means when he says we were dead in our trespasses and sins?
  
2. What do we learn about the nature of sin from description of our deadness in sin in vv. 1-3?
  
3. According to v. 4 what motivated God to save us from our sin and its effects?
  
4. According to vv. 6-7 what is God's end game in His work of redemption?
  
5. According to vv. 8-10 what role each of these play in our redemption:
  - God's grace?
  
  - Our faith?
  
  - Our works?
  
6. How would you respond to the question: Are our good works necessary for our salvation?
  
7. If we are not saved by our good works, why in the world would we ever be motivated to do good works? Doesn't such a belief destroy the "real motivation" for being good? Why or why not?

READ: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation* pp. 6-11.



8. Are James and Paul in contradiction? Why or why not?
  
9. Having read Romans 4 and James 2 do you think that the Protestant Reformers were correct in suggesting that a person is justified before God by faith *alone*? Why or why not?

READ: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation* pp. 12-17.

## WEEK 4 - Solus Christus: Christ Alone

Complete for Sunday, October 8

READ: Galatians 2:15-21

1. In v. 15 Paul is suggesting that even as a Jewish person, a member of God's chosen people, he had to be justified by faith in Christ. If even God's privileged people had to be justified by Jesus, what does this tell you about the necessity of faith in Jesus?
2. If we are not justified by the Law of God, then what do you think is the purpose of the Law (see Galatians 3:19-24, Romans 3:20 and Romans 7:7-8 for further consideration)?
3. What do you think Paul means by v. 18? Consider it in its context.
4. According to v. 21, what would nullify the grace of God that comes through Christ? How so?
5. What's so problematic with saying that salvation does not come through Christ *alone*? What's wrong with saying, "Salvation comes through Christ and...."?
6. According to v. 20 what motivated Christ to give himself up for us?



## WEEK 5 - Sola Scriptura: Scripture Alone (Part 1)

Complete for Sunday, October 15

READ: Galatians 1

1. What do you feel is more liberating: 1) God communicating to me internally through impressions or feelings OR 2) God communicating to me externally through understanding what a “prophet” has written in a book?
  
2. Why would you suggest one or the other? Take a few minutes to justify and explain your answer.
  
3. Why is it necessary to have a sure standard by which to determine the truth?
  
4. The doctrine of Sola Scriptura suggests that God’s written revelation about Christ in the Bible is the final arbiter of the truth. Consider each of these passages and state how you think these either support or do not support this teaching.
  - “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! ~Galatians 1:6-9 (NASB)
  
  - “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ~Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB)



## **WEEK 6 - Sola Scriptura: Scripture Alone (Part 2)**

Complete for Sunday, October 22

READ: Hebrews 1:1-3

1. The writer of Hebrews suggests that Jesus is God's word of the "last days". What does this seem to suggest about finality of God's word in Jesus?
2. Who does the writer suggest that Jesus is? How does this identity contrast with that of a mere prophet or angel?
3. What does Jesus's identity suggest regarding the authority of God's revelation in Jesus?

READ: Luke 24

4. What did Jesus rebuke his disciples on regarding their understanding of the Old Testament (Hebrew) Scriptures?
5. How might this critique connect to Paul's insistence in 1 Corinthians 2:2?

READ: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation* pp. 24-27.

## **WEEK 7 - Soli Deo Gloria: To the Glory of God Alone**

Complete for Sunday, November 5

READ: Ephesians 1:3-14

1. What repeated refrain do you find in Ephesians 1:6, 1:12 and 1:14?
2. Roughly speaking, what are the three distinct subjects of each of the sections that end with these refrains?
3. What does this teach us about God's purpose/goal in our redemption and thus what our "big purpose" ought to be?
4. How does this square with Romans 11:36?
5. Speaking of Romans 11:36, what are the three prepositions in the first sentence of this verse? What is the significance of using these three prepositions together in this way?

READ: Colossians 3:17, 23-25 & 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

6. What should be our motivation in all of life?
7. How might this truth effect the way we do our "secular work"?

8. How might this truth effect the way we love, serve and reach out to our neighbors?
  
9. How might this truth effect the way we love and serve our family members?
  
10. How might this truth effect the way we approach our voluntary service to the body of Christ?
  
11. How should this truth drive us to excellence?
  
12. Why doesn't it affect us more? State why you think it doesn't, stating specific reasons for each of these areas.
  - In our secular work?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - In our love and service to our neighbors?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - In our family life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - In our service to the church?

READ: *Freedom Movement: 500 Years of Reformation* pp. 28-33.



## **WEEK 9 - The Freedom of True Repentance**

Complete for Sunday, November 19

READ: Ephesians 2:1-10

1. This passage does not use the term “repentance”, but it seems safe to assume that it is behind the point that Paul is trying to make. Make a brainstorm list of what we learn about repentance from this passage. Come up with at least 7-10 things.

2. What is the connection between grace, faith and good works, and how does this connect to the idea of repentance?

READ: John 3:19-21

3. According to this passage, why do we struggle to repent?

4. In light of this, what do you think must precede repentance?

READ: 2 Corinthians 7:10

5. What is the end game of repentance? In other words, once one repents how should one feel about themselves and their relationship with God?

6. What do you think inhibits us from experiencing this?