

Church History
Lesson 8: The Big Ideas of the Reformation

BIG IDEA #1: THE FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION

The Reformation was a 16th-century movement to reform the corruption and abuses in the Roman Catholic Church ending in the establishment of the Protestant Churches that exist today.

Those who protested the abuses and sought reform were called Protestants and/or Reformers. What were they seeking to reform?

Men like Martin Luther and John Calvin sought to return the Church to its Biblical roots regarding salvation in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church's man-made system of works-salvation. They summarized their theological convictions in what has come to be known as "The 5 Solas of the Reformation". The five solas are five Latin phrases (or slogans) that teach the core principles of the Reformers.

1. **Sola Scriptura:**

Scripture Alone is the final authority for faith and practice. Thus no council, denomination, pastor, elder, board, book, school or ministry has the final say in matters of faith, doctrine, practice or belief. Our conscience is chained to the word of God.

2. **Sola Fide:**

It is by Faith Alone apart from all human works, apart from all human merit, apart from any agency. There is no other plan of salvation which is acceptable to God. The righteousness of God imputed to a believing sinner is the only means of justification.

3. **Sola Gratia:**

God's Grace Alone can save a person. God's grace is both his stance toward us, (namely his graciousness) and the desire and power to do his will (His enablement). When we affirm that we are saved by grace alone we mean not only that God has given us an unmerited gift or favor (his graciousness) but also and most importantly, he has overcome our depravity and inability to respond by his grace (the desire and power to do his will).

4. **Solus Christus:**

Christ Alone is the mediator between God and man and the only priest anyone needs for salvation. He is the only person who can save us and the only way to be saved and justified.

5. **Soli Deo Gloria:**

The Glory of God Alone is the purpose for which all things were and are created. Man cannot take any credit for his salvation since we are all depraved and in need of regeneration. God's greatest purpose in all that he does is to bring glory to Himself. In short, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

BIG IDEA #2: TULIP

The Reformers taught that we are saved by Grace alone, through Faith alone in Christ alone for the Glory of God alone as it is taught in the Scriptures alone (The Five Solas "Alones").

Let's look at the acrostic **TULIP** that is a summary of the Reformation teaching on Salvation. At the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church taught that sin had merely tainted man and that man through the help of the sacramental system could gain merit with God toward their own salvation. In contrast, the reformers returned to the teaching of Scripture and of the Church Father Augustine, namely, that man was totally depraved and in need of the grace of God to be saved.

Total Depravity

All men are totally depraved and their wills are in bondage to their depraved minds and depraved affections or emotions. Men's wills are "free" to choose anything that their minds believe and their affections desire. Unfortunately the scriptures tell us that all men's minds are enemies of God and "cannot" be otherwise except through God's regenerative power. Also scripture tells us that all men hate God and no one seeks after God. The net result is that while men are making free moral choices with their wills they are only choosing off the buffet of their fallen, God hating, non-understanding minds and affections which will always inform their will to choose against the Lordship and glory of God. Thus all men are responsible for their choices freely made.

Unconditional Election

Against the stark backdrop of man's depravity and complete inability to remedy their condition is the glorious truth that God has planned from all eternity to show His power, justice, grace and mercy through saving some even though all deserve eternal punishment. Election is God's eternal plan and choice to save some for His glory. God's choice to save some (election) is based on not on supposed foreseen merit or faith but rather on God's sovereign choice and pleasure.

Limited Atonement

The sufficiency of Christ's atoning work is not limited but rather the scope or purpose of that atonement is limited to the saving of the elect.

Irresistible Grace

Since man is unable to respond to God because of sin and depravity, God in His mercy regenerates some thus making them alive to respond to God with their own now "freed will". God's regeneration and man's response are almost simultaneous when viewed from our perspective but it is God who moves first. Man's response is irresistibly secured by God's saving grace that is the God given capacity to desire and chose Christ. Those whom God has chosen are certainly drawn to Christ. This "drawing" is a work of the Spirit that cannot be resisted. "All that the Father has given me will come to me".

Perseverance of the Saints

All of the elect are kept by God's grace in a saving relationship and will certainly persevere unto eternal life. All those saved by God's grace will persevere in their faith since it is God who keeps them. The elect will never finally fall away and all the elect will be saved.

You Have Asked Me If I Am A Calvinist, And This Is My Response:

The answer to your question, "Are You A Calvinist?" depends on what you mean by the word "Calvinist". Let me give a few examples.

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who doesn't evangelize" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who is cold and uncaring" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who doesn't believe our choices matter" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who doesn't believe in reasonable self-determination" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who idolizes John Calvin" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who believes that God is the author of sin" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who doesn't have a sense of humor" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who thinks they're better than others" then the answer is **NO!**

If by Calvinist you mean,
"the person who believes the **Bible** teaches:
"Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace & Perseverance of the Saints" then the answer is **YES!**

BIG IDEA #3: AD FONTES

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church depended more on tradition than upon Scripture for its final authority. Rome was repeating the error of the Pharisees of whom Jesus said, "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." (Mark 7:8). Rome had left the commandment of God and thus denied its Necessity, Sufficiency and Clarity.

During the late Middle Ages (1100-1500 AD) Rome had increasingly relied on its Sacramental System of Salvation (priests, the merit of saints, the seven sacraments and indulgences) to maintain its absolute power over the souls of those who were ignorant of Scripture. Rome went so far as to ban the translation of the Bible into the languages of the people lest the common man read it and challenge Rome's erroneous interpretation. In addition the Roman Bishop (the "Pope") claimed to have final authority in things spiritual. Therefore, with a monopoly on salvation (the system) and Scripture (the Pope) the necessity, sufficiency and clarity of Scripture was practically denied.

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the Bible. The Latin phrase, "**Ad Fontes**" (to the sources; literally-to the fountains), rallied believers to Bible manuscripts (textual criticism), Bible translation, Bible interpretation and Bible teaching. The Reformation was in fact a return to the Scriptures Authority (Sola Scriptura), Necessity, Sufficiency and Clarity.

The Necessity of Scripture

It is impossible to be saved and sanctified without the Bible.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

The Bible contains all we need for salvation and sanctification.

The Clarity of Scripture

The Bible is understandable to every Christian who seeks God's help.

Make It Matter

1. Read the Bible for Yourself
2. Teach the Bible to Unbelievers (Evangelism) and Believers (Discipleship)
3. Cherish the Bible

BIG IDEA #4: POST TENEBRAS LUX

What does the Creation narrative, the first advent of Christ and the Reformation have in common? The answer is the use of the “light from darkness” motif.

In Genesis “darkness was over the surface of the deep” then God said, “Let there be light”. In Matthew Isaiah 9:2 was quoted to describe the beginning of the ministry of Christ, “the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.”

During the Reformation John Calvin began to use the Latin phrase, “Post Tenebras Lux” (After Darkness....Light) to describe God’s great spiritual reform of the city of Geneva. Soon “Post Tenebras Lux” became the rallying cry for the entire Reformation.

The Middle Ages are often referred to as the “Dark Ages” but in reality there were many advances in the arts, science and technology in that period. Likewise, in the church, there were high seasons of spiritual light but by the late Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church had spread thick darkness over the souls of people. The reformers saw themselves as bringing the light of the gospel to a dark age.

Five beacons from the Reformation continue to light the way today.

The Light of Scripture

It is the PLACE for truth and not the traditions of men taught by Rome.

The Light of the Gospel

It is the PLAN of salvation and not the Roman Catholic sacramental system.

The Light of Regeneration

It is the POWER of God to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. Rome had taught that man was essentially capable of salvation if simply aided by the church.

The Light of a Renewed Mind

It is the PERSPECTIVE gained by regeneration, through the gospel found in Scripture that forms the Protestant Christian Worldview. This worldview has transformed western civilization.

The Light of Reformation

It is the PROVIDENCE of God in saving and preserving His people viewed through the history of the Reformation. These events serve as a prototype for understanding God’s larger plan for the ages.

Make It Matter

1. Beware of those who want you to turn back to a performance-based religion.
2. Live in the light of God’s free gift of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
3. Learn Church History because those who don’t learn from it are doomed to repeat it!

BIG IDEA #5: THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had functionally replaced Christ as the mediator between God and man. Through the inventions of a priestly caste (sacerdotalism) and an elaborate merit system (sacramentalism) Rome perpetuated the lie that the church alone could interpret scripture and offer salvation (*sola ecclesia*).

Sacerdotalism

Rome taught that people cannot approach God on their own, but must come through a priest. Only through the church, it's ordained priesthood and Mary, does God confer blessings on His people.

Sacramentalism

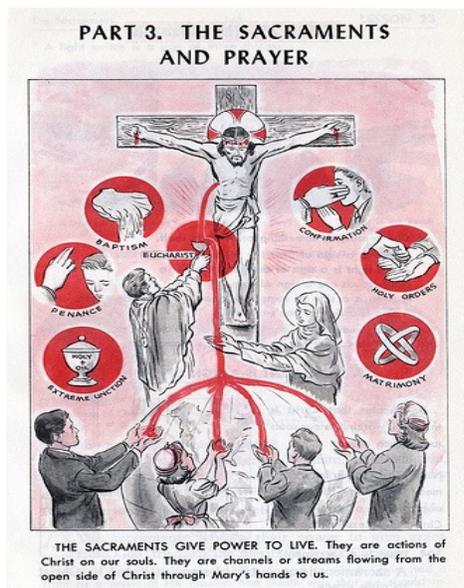
Rome taught that people cannot be saved directly by the grace of God but rather that people receive grace incrementally through the seven sacraments. The grace received is meritorious and adds up for points toward salvation.

Sola Ecclesia

Rome taught that people cannot interpret scripture nor be saved except through the Roman Catholic Church.

The Baltimore Catechism

This page shows how the merits of Christ are distributed through Mary and the priests via the sacraments.



In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the Biblical doctrine of ***"The Priesthood of All Believers"***. This doctrine asserts that people can be saved directly by the grace of God through faith in Christ and can approach God in worship and service without the agency of a human priesthood or ecclesiastical system. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* 1 Peter 2:9.

Men at Work: Job or Calling?

Am I looking for a job or a career? When is a job a career? When is a career just a job? Do I need a "calling" to my job? Can I work a day job but fulfill my calling doing something else? If I'm not "called" to the ministry is God pleased with my "secular" job? These and other questions often perplex the Christian man seeking to please the Lord through his work. Finding an answer begins with a Protestant Biblical Theology of Work (remember the Protestant Work Ethic?) which is grounded in the idea of "Coram Deo".

A False Dichotomy

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Churches' twin errors of Sacerdotalism (*people cannot approach God on their own, but must come through a priest*) & Sacramentalism (*people cannot be saved directly by the grace of God but rather that people receive grace incrementally through the seven sacraments*) produced a compartmentalized view of life. On the one hand was the Sacred and on the other hand was the Secular.

The Sacred vs. The Secular

Rome perpetuated the "religious" vs. "non-religious" dichotomy by insisting that religious activities like participating in the sacraments, becoming a priest or nun (holy orders) or attending confession were "holy or sacred" as opposed to a person's home life, vocation or recreation, which were seen as merely "secular".

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the Biblical principle that all of life is sacred. The Reformers taught the Latin phrase, "**Coram Deo**" (In the Presence of God), which inspired believers to live their entire lives in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

In the Presence of God

Since God is everywhere present (omnipresence) and always approachable the believer is to live a life of holiness and moment-by-moment worship whether at church at work and at home.

Under the Authority of God

Since God is King and the ruler of all of life (sovereign) the believer is to see that all of life is sacred and all of life has meaning at church at work and at home.

To the Glory of God

Since God is the creator and sustainer of all life the believer is to view everything (family, vocation, recreation, church) as under the Lordship of Christ.

Make It Matter

1. Pursue your daily life as a calling from God under the Lordship of Christ.
2. Rejoice in the reality that God is present in your everyday life and that you do not need a priest or a system to approach and know Him personally.
3. Understand the terms **vocation/calling**. The words vocation and calling essentially mean the same thing. Calling comes from a Greek word, kaleo, and vocation comes from a Latin root vox, meaning voice. Each was intended by Protestant Reformers to point to an entire life lived in response to the voice, or call, of God. Today people use the term vocation to simply mean work but vocation is actually your call from God to glorify Him in whatever work you do.
4. Understand the term **occupation**. Your occupation is what you do for a work but it derives its greatest meaning when lived in light of God's calling (vocation). Here are definitions of work by Dorothy Sayers & John Stott which may help.

Dorothy Sayers says, “[Work] should be the full expression of the worker’s faculties, the thing in which he finds spiritual, mental and bodily satisfaction, and the medium in which he offers himself to God.”

John Stott says: “Work is the expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God.”

BIG IDEA #7: SEMPER REFORMANDA

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church claimed to be, “*always the same*” (*semper eadem*). Rome hoped to shield itself from a growing investigation into, and criticism of its doctrine and practices by presenting an image of unchanging adherence to the New Testament and to the earliest church.

Is Rome “Always the Same”?

Ironically, Rome attempts to support its claim of unchanged adherence to Scripture through the invention of two new doctrines, (1) Apostolic Succession (The Pope is in an unbroken chain of leaders of the church beginning with the apostle Peter) and (2) The Universal Consent of the Fathers (That the doctrines held by Rome have always been universally held from the most ancient church).

Is it true? No! Rome has added numerous unbiblical doctrines since the time of the Apostles:

590-1517 AD

593 AD The Doctrine Of Purgatory Popularized From The Apocrypha
607 AD Boniface III Is The First Person To Take The Title Of "Universal Bishop".
787 AD Worship Of Icons And Statues Approved.
995 AD Canonization Of Dead Saints
1022 AD Penance
1079 AD Celibacy Enforced For Priests, Bishops, Presbyters
1190 AD Sale Of Indulgences Or "Tickets To Sin" (Punishment Of Sin Removed)
1215 AD Transubstantiation
1215 AD Auricular Confession Of Sins To Priests Instituted
1215 AD Mass A Sacrifice Of Christ
1268 AD Priestly Power Of Absolution
1414 AD Laity No Longer Offered Lord's Cup At Communion
1439 AD Purgatory A Dogma
1439 AD Doctrine Of Seven Sacraments Affirmed

1517-2017 AD

1545 AD Man-Made Tradition Of Church Made Equal To Bible
1545 AD Apocryphal Books Added To Bible
1546 AD Justification By Human Works Of Merit
1547 AD Confirmation
1870 AD Infallibility Of The Pope
1950 AD Assumption Of The Body Of The Virgin Mary Into Heaven Shortly After Her Death.
1954 AD Immaculate Conception Of Mary

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the Bible as the only unchanging standard for doctrine and practice. After the Reformation the Latin phrase, “***Semper Reformanda***” (Always Reforming) was used to remind Christians that God is always reforming His Church. The phrase “always reforming” is taken from the larger phrase, “the church is reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God”. So, the reformation of the church is not the invention of new doctrines but rather a return to the standard of Scripture in belief and behavior.

Make It Matter

1. Don't believe Rome's lie!
2. Examine your beliefs and behavior in light of Scripture.

BIG IDEA #8: SOLUM EVANGELIUM

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had obscured the simplicity of the gospel through the invention of an elaborate merit system of salvation. As we have mentioned several times, that system was built on the twin errors of **Sacerdotalism** (*people cannot approach God on their own, but must come through a priest*) & **Sacramentalism** (*people cannot be saved directly by the grace of God but rather that people receive grace incrementally through the seven sacraments*).

The System at Work (circa 1517)

Rome enjoyed a monopoly on salvation. Here's how the game worked:

1. Merit is necessary for salvation.
2. Merit (salvation points) can only be obtained through the Roman Sacramental System. (The Treasury of Merit)
3. No one knows how many points you need so you can never know if you've done enough
4. Certain types of sin negate or remove merit
5. Your level of accrued merit points determines your afterlife destination (Heaven, Hell or Purgatory)
6. Purgatory (purging) is for the Roman Catholic who hasn't done enough to get to heaven but has enough points to avoid hell. Merit points were added to the person based on the number of years they spend in in purgatory.
7. A "get out of purgatory card" could be obtained through an **Indulgence**.
8. An Indulgence supposedly purchased a pardon or remission of sin by the Pope based on merit drawn from the Treasury of Merit (I'm not making this up). The Treasury of Merit was filled by the righteousness of Christ, Mary and the Saints (dead Catholics who had more merit points than they needed to earn their own salvation).
9. Indulgences were sold (yes, for money) at first for years off purgatory than eventually for the *Complete Remission Of All Sins For All Time!* It was this last super sale that led to Martin Luther's 95 Thesis against Indulgences and "selling salvation".

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the simplicity of the Biblical Gospel. The Reformers teaching on the Gospel is summarized by the Latin phrase, "**Solum Evangelium**". (The Gospel Alone), which reminds Christians that the Gospel message alone is God's Power for Salvation and Plan of Salvation. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous *man* shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

The Content of the Gospel

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the Gospel is "Christ died, was buried and rose again the third day for our sins".

Our Response to the Gospel

Since Christ has already paid for the penalty of sin we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone!

Make It Matter

1. Believe (trust) on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!
2. Preach the Gospel clearly!

BIG IDEA #9: THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had functionally embraced the error of Semi-Pelagianism. **Pelagianism** (man has no original sin) and **Semi-Pelagianism** (man is affected by sin but not depraved and can cooperate in their salvation by their free will) had been condemned in the Ancient Church.

Augustine (Early Church Father) Had Opposed Pelagius (And His Heresy) And Had Taught Instead:

1. That all men are totally depraved and their wills are in bondage to their depraved minds and depraved affections or emotions.
2. Men's wills are "free" to choose anything that their minds believe and their affections desire. The problem is all men's minds are enemies of God and "cannot" be otherwise except through God's regenerative power.
3. Scripture tells us that all men hate God and no one seeks after God. The net result is that while men are making free moral choices with their wills they are only choosing off the buffet of their fallen, God hating, non-understanding minds and affections which will always inform their will to choose against the Lordship and glory of God. Thus all men are responsible for their choices freely made.

Rome moved away from the teaching of Augustine and concluded that sin had only tainted man and that man through the help of the sacramental system could gain merit with God toward their own salvation. This error undermined the Biblical teachings of salvation by grace alone (God overcomes your deadness by regenerating you) and the glory of God alone (God gets the glory in salvation for resurrecting dead/unresponsive people).

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers pointed Christians back to the Biblical Doctrine of Sin and the Depravity of Man. Martin Luther' **"Bondage of the Will"** opposed the heresy of Semi-Pelagianism and affirmed the Biblical & Augustinian teachings. This landmark book restored a reliance on the sufficiency of God's irresistible grace in salvation.

Make It Matter

1. Give glory to God for resurrecting you! (Ephesians 2:4-5)
2. Rejoice in the grace of God that can save anyone!
3. Pray for the lost and preach the gospel with confidence in the power of God to save.
4. Read Luther's *Bondage of the Will*.

"I frankly confess that, for myself, even if it could be, I should not want "free-will" to be given me, nor anything to be left in my own hands to enable me to endeavour after salvation; not merely because in face of so many dangers, and adversities and assaults of devils, I could not stand my ground ; but because even were there no dangers. I should still be forced to labour with no guarantee of success.† But now that God has taken my salvation out of the control of my own will, and put it under the control of His, and promised to save me, not according to my working or running, but according to His own grace and mercy, I have the comfortable certainty that He is faithful and will not lie to me, and that He is also great and powerful, so that no devils or opposition can break Him or pluck me from Him. Furthermore, I have the comfortable certainty that I please God, not by reason of the merit of my works, but by reason of His merciful favour promised to me; so that, if I work too little, or badly, He does not impute it to me, but with fatherly compassion pardons me and makes me better. This is the glorying of all the saints in their God." - Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957), 313-314.

BIG IDEA #10: THE BIBLE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had prohibited the translation of the Bible into the vernacular (language of the people). Ostensibly, the prohibition and condemnation of Bible translation was to merely prevent the possibility of mistranslation, but the reality is that it strengthened Rome's tyrannical hold on the souls of people by keeping the masses in ignorance of Scripture.

Rome's Condemnation of Bible Translation

Rome enjoyed a monopoly on salvation and feared that the translation of Scripture into the language of the people would expose Rome to an increasing critique of its man-made system and its theological and ethical abuses. To stem the tide the Roman Catholic Church issued pronouncements against the translation into, and/or, the possession of the Bible in the language of the people.

Council of Toulouse - 1229 A.D.

Canon 14. "We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; unless anyone from motive of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; **but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.**"

The Council of Tarragona - 1234 A.D.

"**No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language**, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned lest, be he a cleric or a layman, he be suspected until he is cleared of all suspicion."

John Wycliffe - Morning Star of The Reformation

John Wycliffe was the very first to translate the entire Bible into English, which he completed in 1382. At the Council of Constance, in 1415, Wycliffe was posthumously condemned as "**that pestilent wretch of damnable heresy who invented a new translation of the scriptures in his mother tongue.**" By the decree of the Council, more than 40 years after his death, Wycliffe's bones were exhumed and publicly burned and the ashes were thrown into the Swift River.

In sharp contrast to Rome the Reformers believed that every person should have the opportunity to read the Bible in their own language. Martin Luther considered his translation of the Bible into German as his greatest contribution to the Reformation. Henry Zecher sums it up best, "Everyone in Germany either read Luther's new Bible or listened to it being read. Its phrasing became the people's phrasing, its speech patterns their speech patterns. So universal was its appeal, and so thoroughly did it embrace the entire range of the German tongue, that it formed a linguistic rallying point for the formation of the modern German language. It helped formally restructure German literature and the German performing arts. Its impact, and Luther's in general, were so awesome that Frederick the Great later called Luther the personification of the German national spirit. Many scholars still consider him the most influential German who ever lived."

Make It Matter

1. Read the Bible! A lot!
2. Support Bible Translation work.

BIG IDEA #11: THE THREE WALLS OF THE ROMANIST

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church was attempting to insulate itself against any and all movements that called for Scriptural reform. By erecting what Martin Luther called, *"The Three Walls of the Romanists"*, the Papacy believed itself to be impervious to legal, theological and ecclesiastical challenges to its corrupt system.

The First Wall

That Secular Authority Has No Jurisdiction Over Them.

The Second Wall

That Only The Pope Is Able To Interpret And Explain Scripture.

The Third Wall

That Nobody, But The Pope Himself, Can Call A General Church Council.

The result was Spiritual Tyranny. The Pope claimed to be above the law of the land, the law of God and the law of the Church. The Pope had become the final authority on all things spiritual and secular.

In sharp contrast to Rome, Luther pointed Christians back to the Scriptures as the final authority. Luther's book *"Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation"* exposed the tyranny of the Papacy and encouraged needed Biblical reformation and renewal in the Church. Let's take a quick look at Luther's own words as he exposes the problem and encourages reform.

Exposing The Problem

"The Romanists have, with great adroitness, drawn three walls round themselves, with which they have hitherto protected themselves, so that no one could reform them, whereby all Christendom has fallen terribly."

The First Wall

"Firstly, if pressed by the temporal power, they have affirmed and maintained that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but on the contrary that the spiritual power is above the temporal."

The Second Wall

"Secondly, if it were proposed to admonish them with the Scriptures, they objected that no one may interpret the Scriptures but the Pope."

The Third Wall

"Thirdly, if they are threatened with a Council, they pretend that no one may call a Council but the Pope. Thus they have secretly stolen our three rods, so that they may be unpunished, and entrenched themselves behind these three walls, to act with all wickedness and malice, as we now see."

Encouraging Reform

"Now may God help us, and give us one of those trumpets, that overthrew the walls of Jericho, so that we may blow down these walls of straw and paper, and that we may set free our Christian rods, for the chastisement of sin, and expose the craft and deceit of the devil, so that we may amend ourselves by punishment and again obtain God's favour."

The First Wall

"Therefore the temporal Christian power must exercise its office without let or hindrance, without considering whom it may strike, whether pope, or bishop, or priest: whoever is guilty let him suffer for it. Whatever the ecclesiastical law says in opposition to this, is merely the invention of Romanist arrogance. For this is what St. Paul says to all Christians: "Let every soul" (I presume including the Popes) "be subject unto the higher powers: for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. xiii. 1-4.) Also St. Peter: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake . . . for so is the will of God." (1 Peter ii. 13, 15.) He has also said, that men would come, who should despise government (2 Peter ii.); as has come to pass through ecclesiastical law."

The Second Wall

"Therefore it is a wickedly devised fable, and they cannot quote a single letter to confirm it, that it is for the Pope alone to interpret the Scriptures or to confirm the interpretation of them: they have assumed the authority of their own selves. And though they say, that this authority was given to St. Peter when the keys were given to him, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to St. Peter alone, but to the whole community. Besides, the keys were not ordained for doctrine or authority, but for sin, to bind or loose; and what they claim besides this is mere invention."

The Third Wall

"The third wall falls of itself, as soon as the first two have fallen; for if the Pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, we are bound to stand by the Scriptures, to punish and to constrain him, according to Christ's commandment; "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Make It Matter

1. Submit first to the authority of Scripture, then, as Scripture teaches, submit to government (Romans 13:1-7) and Church leaders (Hebrews 13:17)
2. Live out the doctrine of The Priesthood of All Believers by reading and obeying Scripture and exercising your spiritual gifts for the glory of God.
3. Help your Catholic neighbor escape the cultic tyranny of Rome through the life giving Gospel of Christ. The Romanist will hate you but your freed neighbors will eternally thank you. Soli Deo Gloria!

BIG IDEA #12: THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had, ironically, moved from being the persecuted to being the persecutor of evangelical faith.

Persecution in France

French Reformers lost their land, liberty and lives at the hands of government and Roman Catholic persecutors. False charges and rumors abounded. The King of France claimed that the Reformers were attempting to cause anarchy and civil unrest. The Catholic Church claimed that (1) The church fathers opposed the Reformation teaching (2) The Reformers were inventing a new religion (3) The Reformers erred in interpreting scripture.

In sharp contrast to Rome, John Calvin pointed Christians back to the Scriptures as the final authority and answered the false accusations against the Reformers and their doctrine.

Calvin's book *"The Institutes of the Christian Religion"* begins with a preface addressed to Francis I, King of France. Calvin appealed to King Francis for just treatment of the Reformers and for their innocence in relation to false charges against them. On his first purpose for writing Calvin stated, *"My reasons for publishing the Institutes, were first that I might vindicate from unjust affront my brethren whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord, and next that some sorrow and anxiety should move foreign people, since the same sufferings threaten many."*

Beyond the desire to defend the legal rights of the Reformers Calvin wrote to teach true Christian doctrine. Of his Institutes he said, *"My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness. And I undertook this labor especially for our French countrymen, very many of whom I knew to be hungering and thirsting for Christ; but I saw very few who had been duly imbued with even a slight knowledge of him."*

Protestants today will gain tremendous spiritual insight from a read of the Institutes. Mistakenly, many believe that the Institutes are simply an exposition of "TULIP" and/or the Doctrine of Election. However, the fact is that Calvin does not address the doctrine of election until the end of the third of four volumes. His passion was to see hearts set ablaze for the Knowledge of God and the Glory of God.

Make It Matter

1. Read the Institutes!

BIG IDEA #13: MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church relied on a **forged Medieval document** to claim supreme authority over all churches and all temporal powers.

The ***Donation of Constantine*** was a document supposedly given by the Emperor Constantine to Pope Sylvester I in the 4th century, granting the pope (therefore the Roman Church) dominion over all Italy, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Alexandria.

A Short Quote From The Forgery

"We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our miter, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the least authority, where God hath established the head of his religion."

The document also claims that Constantine granted supreme control to the papacy over all clergy. Although the document was exposed in the 15th century as a Roman Catholic forgery, the net affect of the document was the establishment of a church and state synthesis through which the papacy attempted to control not only the souls of people but also the wealth and power of the state. The sword of the state was used against any and all who challenged the pope's religious authority, doctrine or practices. Thus, all attempts at reform were crushed by Constantine's sword in the name of Christ.

In sharp contrast to Rome, **The Anabaptists** emphasized the separation of church and state as well as the importance of individual soul liberty in matters of conscience.

The Anabaptists ("to baptize again") were so called because of their rejection of infant baptism and their belief in believer's baptism. This independent movement was birthed in the reform movement of Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, separated from that movement and soon spread throughout Europe during the time of the Reformation.

While the work of men like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli brought much needed reform it was the Anabaptists who pushed for even more drastic separation from Catholicism—not just Reformation, but **"Radical Reformation."** The Anabaptists differed from the other Reformers over the relationship between church and state. Most of the Reformers believed that the use of politics and law to enact church and social reform was justified whereas the Anabaptists believed that church and state should be separated and that each individual church was accountable only to Christ and Scripture, not to any human institution.

The Anabaptist movement's ideals played a significant role in the establishment of religious liberty in the years that followed. Although it was the English Baptist movement of the Reformation, and not the Anabaptist movement, that was the direct ancestor of modern Baptists, the Anabaptists none-the-less planted the seeds:

Basic Beliefs Of Baptists (From The English Reformation Influenced By The Anabaptists)
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Biblical Authority

Autonomy of the Local Church

Priesthood of all Believers

Two Ordinances

Individual Soul Liberty

Separation of Church and State

Two Offices

Saved Church Membership

Make It Matter

1. Rely on the Sword of the Spirit to bring revival and not on the Sword of the State!

BIG IDEA #14: THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

By the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had a long and infamous history of persecuting those who protested its abuses and/or sought reform of its doctrines. This cruel practice, continued and heightened during the English Protestant Reformation, brought about a surprising and unwanted result for the Roman Catholic Church.

Bloody Mary

The Reformation in England was at first a political than ultimately a religious reformation. The Protestant movement grew steadily beginning in 1527 until Mary I ascended to the throne in 1553. Mary was the daughter of King Henry VIII, and **a devout Catholic**. During her five-year reign, she worked to restore Catholicism as England's state religion and sanctioned the persecution of Protestants, hundreds of whom were burned at the stake, earning her the nickname **Bloody Mary**.

In sharp contrast to the Roman Catholic efforts to snuff out the Protestant Reformation in England, the Lord provided two major means for its growth:

The Courage of the Martyrs

Many Protestants were martyred before and during the reign of Mary. Two of the most famous incidents were the death of William Tyndale and the deaths of Bishop Ridley and Bishop Latimer.

William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, spoke these final words before being burned at the stake, *"Lord! Open The King Of England's Eyes!"*

When the fire was laid at Dr. Ridley's feet, Mr. Latimer said, *"Be Of Good Cheer, Ridley; And Play The Man. We Shall This Day, By God's Grace, Light Up Such A Candle In England, As I Trust, Will Never Be Put Out."*

The Book of Martyrs

Church Historian David Calhoun comments on the importance of the book, **Foxe's Book of Martyrs**, "Out of this same period came one of the most famous books in English history, which was written by the contemporary John Foxe. We usually refer to that book as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, although its actual title is *Acts and Monuments*. John Foxe tells the story of many of the Marian martyrs. He also goes back and tells the story of martyrdom since the beginning. He saw the martyrs under Bloody Mary as continuing a great succession of faithful people since the days of the early church. This book is probably next to the English Bible, and alongside of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as the three most important books in English church history and the most formative influences shaping England's Protestantism. Some of the martyrs were famous people, but most were very ordinary people. Many were women. Some were very young people who died through the persecution during the days of Bloody Mary."

Make It Matter

1. Read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

BIG IDEA #15: PERSECUTION LEADS TO MISSIONS (HOW THE REFORMATION CAME TO AMERICA)

This year we are celebrating the 502nd Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and the 455th Anniversary of the first arrival of Protestants in America.

Who Were They?

Was it the Pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620? No. Was it John Smith in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607? No. Was it the Lost Colony of Roanoke in North Carolina in 1587? No.

The first Protestants to arrive in America were the Huguenots in Jacksonville, Florida in 1564. The Huguenots were French Calvinist Protestants, who, like other Protestants, faced tremendous persecution in Europe from the Roman Catholic Church and from Catholic government officials. Hundreds of Huguenot refugees settled on the banks of the St. John's River at Fort Caroline in what is now known as Jacksonville, Florida.

Like the Plymouth pilgrims who followed, these early pilgrims were seeking freedom to practice their religious convictions and to establish a new life together.

What Happened?

Unfortunately, the religious freedom and prosperous new life sought by the first Huguenot settlers, was denied to them by the rival Spanish Catholic explorers and militia.

The Spanish Catholic military leader Menéndez led a massacre of the Fort Caroline settlement in Jacksonville, then in the days that followed he organized the execution of hundreds of Huguenot prisoners a few miles south of St. Augustine. Fort Mantanzas (*the Spanish word for "slaughters"*), a national monument, now marks the place where the Huguenot martyrs fell. Admiral Menéndez reported back to King Philip of Spain that he had spared only 16 (self-professed Catholics) but, "All the rest died for being Lutherans and against our Holy Catholic Faith." To Menéndez all Protestants were "Lutherans".

The Link

The Reformation came to America through the courageous Huguenots and eventually gained root through the Plymouth Pilgrims in 1620. That spiritual root has grown over the years to produce rich fruits of Protestant doctrine, devotion and discipleship.

Make It Matter

1. Thank God for early Protestant martyrs who paved the way for our faith and freedom.
2. Recognize the important role our Protestant forerunners played in American History.

BIG IDEA #16: THE FRUITS OF THE REFORMATION

Through the Reformation the Lord restored the Biblical Gospel to the center of the Churches' Message & Mission. Wherever the Gospel has been received and Biblical Protestant faith has flourished Christians have experienced the joy of bearing significant spiritual fruit. Below are some of the most important fruits of the Reformation as seen in the personal life of Christians and the corporate life of the church.

One Place for Truth

Protestants look to the Bible as the final authority for faith and practice. Thus no council, denomination, pastor, elder, board, book, school or ministry has the final say in matters of faith, doctrine, practice or belief.

One Power to Save Us

Protestants rely on God's grace alone to save them. God's grace is both his stance toward us, (namely his graciousness) and the desire and power to do His will (His enablement). When Protestants affirm that they are saved by grace alone they mean not only that God has given them an unmerited gift or favor (his graciousness) but also and most importantly, he has overcome their depravity and inability to respond by His grace (the desire and power to do his will).

One Plan to Save Us

Protestants believe in salvation by faith alone apart from all human works, apart from all human merit, apart from any agency. There is no other plan of salvation which is acceptable to God. The righteousness of God imputed to a believing sinner is the only means of justification.

One Person to Save Us

Protestants trust in Christ alone as the mediator between God and man and the only priest anyone needs for salvation. He is the only person who can save us and the only way to be saved and justified.

One Purpose in Life

Protestants live for the glory of God alone as the purpose for which all things were and are created. Man cannot take any credit for his salvation since we are all depraved and in need of regeneration. God's greatest purpose in all that he does is to bring glory to Himself. In short, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Make It Matter

1. Enjoy the fruit of being saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as it is taught in Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone!