

Maintaining the Cause of the Reformation

by Alan Cairns

Alan Cairns emphasizes the importance of recognizing and maintaining the core principles of the Reformation, particularly the themes of Christian liberty and free justification in today's church.

Duration: 1:18:09

Scripture: Galatians 4:19

Topics: "Reformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of liberty in Christ for believers. He highlights the themes of the Gospel, including the sovereignty of God's will, the merits of Jesus Christ, and the free justification of sinners. The preacher encourages believers to stand firm in the liberty that Christ has given them and not be bound by fear or human ideas. He also extends an invitation to those who do not know Christ to come and experience the freedom and forgiveness that only He can offer.

Transcript

Each October, here in the church, we recognize Reformation Month. That is because on the 31st of October, 1517, Martin Luther kneeled his now famous 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg in protest against the seal of papal indulgences. You may pay and sin without having to pay for your sin.

That was the message, and Luther objected. Some churches recognize Reformation Day. It's a pity that to most, the 31st of October is Halloween.

All Hallows Eve, something goes back to medieval Europe, as an observance. I remember as a little child, we put on false faces and ducked for apples and all the rest of that. And got apple pie, and if you got the right piece, you get money wrapped up in it or something.

I can understand kids always wanting to raffle whatever the occasion. But it is a pity that in the Protestant church, there seems to be little appreciation for the real significance of the 31st of October. Certainly one of the most pivotal days in the history, not only of the Church of Christ, but of the entire Western world.

The world as we know it today, whether liberal politicians like to acknowledge it or not, the world as we know it today, is the mostly direct, and if not direct, certainly the indirect product of the Protestant Reformation. As I say, some churches, therefore, few in number, recognize Reformation Day. When I came to Greenville, I decided, and I felt it was necessary to do so, I decided that each month of October, I

would set aside the Sabbath evenings to deal with the great themes of the Protestant Reformation, the story of God's mighty movings, and over the years we have traced the Reformation in England, in Scotland, in Germany, in Switzerland, even in Bohemia, as it was once called, later years the area of Czechoslovakia.

We have dealt with the issues, the themes, the events, the people, the biographies, all in an attempt to do what the Bible tells us to do, that is to rehearse the mighty acts of the Lord. This year we will again recognize Reformation Month, and I will state right at the very beginning, while I'm not intending to deal with the Reformation in place A or B, or whatever, in these weeks, it is my intention to lay hold, once again, of some of the key thoughts, themes, issues, stands, and illustrate them as necessary from the history of the Reformation, so that we as a church may recapture, if we have lost it, or at least re-strengthen and refresh our vision of and commitment to the great work that God did for the Christian church and for the world in and through the Protestant Reformation. And it is my prayer that God will touch many, especially young men, touch hearts.

We live in an age of inflated heads and empty hearts, an age when people get so much trivial knowledge about God, His Christ, His church, His work, but the head does not affect the heart. There is a crisis today in the work of God for men, and that is not to demean the role of the women, for they have a role to fill and there is a need for young women giving themselves to serve Christ. But no church movement is ever going to be greater than the men God raises to support it.

There is a crisis of need for men sold out to God, counting all but loss to serve Christ. Men of the book, men of prayer, men of heart, men of vision, men of courage, men of commitment, who will face any foe, pay any price to do the will of God. Anointed men, preaching men, spirit-filled men, we have had our fill of church administrators filling pulpits.

We have had our fill of PR men filling pulpits. What America needs, what the church of Christ needs, what the free Presbyterian church needs, is a return of the prophet to the pulpit. One of the most fundamental descriptions of preaching in the New Testament is prophesying.

Not necessarily foretelling the future. The role of the prophet is to speak with divine authority, with divine anointing, with divine courage, to make known the will and way of God to the people, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. That is the prayer and the burden that I bring to the pulpit in these Reformation services in 2003.

I'm always glad to have help in Reformation Month. Once again, if my memory is right, the final Wednesday evening of the month, Dr. Pinozian will be our special guest, and I ask you to keep that Wednesday free. Make sure you are here.

Some of you may never have heard Dr. Pinozian's now-renowned first-person presentations of some of the great Reformers. He started doing them in this pulpit, and nobody who was ever here the first time he ever came as Martin Luther will ever forget it. It was one of those high-water marks.

Every time he comes, we are blessed, and I'm looking forward to his return. There's a lot of work involved in that, so he's only doing one this year, but we're looking forward to that, and I trust you'll be with us. As again, what we seek to do is rehearse the mighty acts of the Lord.

I don't think I've started to preach yet. I haven't even got to the Bible reading. We have another saying in Northern Ireland.

It speaks for itself. The night's a pup. Just work that one out.

The night's a pup. A long way to go before it becomes a dog. The people at home tonight not thinking anything of desecrating the Sabbath day by watching four hours of football.

Well, actually, about one hour of football, four hours of timeouts, and to let all those overweight linemen recapture their breath, but we're not getting into that. That's why I tell you rugby's the greatest game in the world, but I'm not even preaching in that tonight. So we're not going to worry about the time, at least I'm not.

People down in the nursery may. My wife tells me every preacher should have to work in the nursery. I tell you, one diaper change would be enough for me.

I may stop them crying, but that's about it. Galatians chapter 4. Galatians chapter 4, verse 19. Reading to chapter 5, verse 1. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons. The one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondmaid was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants. If I may interject there, I'm not going to be expounding the allegory tonight. I freely admit, on reading this, this is one of those passages in Paul, of which Peter spoke when he said Paul wrote some things that were hard to be understood.

This is one of those difficult passages. However, I'm not trying to shirk it, nor am I trying to sell tapes, but I have dealt with this passage in detail, and if you wish to have the exposition, you may just listen by tape. But for tonight, I cannot return to that exposition.

Simply, Paul says, Hagar and Sarah and their sons are an allegory, for these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not. Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not. For the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son.

For the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

That last verse that we have read will form our text this evening. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. The epistle to the

Galatians has always been a favorite epistle among Protestants.

The great themes of this epistle are the truths which launched the Protestant Reformation and inspired individual Christians, churches, and at times even nations to great and heroic deeds. In Galatians, Paul reels off one after another the major themes of the Gospel. The sovereignty of the will of God in the redemption of sinners.

The soul and all sufficient merits of Jesus Christ in procuring that redemption. The free justification of sinners through faith in Christ without any input of merit from any works of their own. And then one of the truly outstanding marks of this epistle, the theme of the liberty in Christ of the Christian man.

Now our text tonight obviously deals with this subject of liberty. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Time does not permit me to give any prolonged exposition of the text, but do remark that Christ makes His people free.

Whom the Son sets free is free indeed. There is a liberty that belongs by right to the people of God. He hath not given us the spirit of bondage.

He has not bound us in the prison house of fear, of uncertainty, of human speculation, or of the tyranny of human ideas. He has set us free. Speaking as a committed, what the world calls Calvinist, what I believe is simply believing the Bible, allowing God to say whatever He wants to say, and believing it, whether I can explain it or not, so that when He speaks in the highest terms of a predestinating decree, I do not question why has God the right.

I rejoice that He does it. When, on the other hand, He speaks of a love that reaches to this vast world of ours and commands us to preach Christ to every man commanding his repentance, I do not try to trim it according to my belief in predestination. I accept what God says.

By the way, it is no paradox. It is simple truth. But as what the world calls a Calvinist, I have to confess that it grieves me to the core that the cry of Christian liberty has degenerated into the so-called right of Christians to drink beer, smoke cigarettes, or whatever.

That is Christian liberty. Most of the people who promote it are liars. Now, that is going to go out over Sermon Audio, and I'll get a few emails.

Are you daring to call these people liars? Yes, I am. Most of them, not because they don't believe what they're saying, but because they are so addicted to their booze and their weed, and yet they have the temerity to term it liberty. Most of these people do what they're doing.

Just ask them to stop it, and you'll find it would be for them very, very difficult. It's not liberty. If you tell me your bondage, your addiction is Christian liberty, I take the freedom, note the word, to tell you I believe it's a lie.

In my book, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, I deal a little with this, not a lot, in my usual very, very restraint and most uncontroversial manner. And I talk about these people who say there is no command not to take alcohol. And I simply quote the Scripture which says that you're not even to look upon the wine when it's red, when it moves itself in the cup, which anybody takes to be a description of alcoholic wine.

And by the way, do not believe that wine is necessarily alcoholic. The Bible uses the word to describe the cluster while it's still in the vine, when it's just off the vine, when it's unfermented, and all the way through to fermented wine. So the word wine, whether in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or any of the classical languages, has a very wide meaning, not the restricted meaning we give it today.

I simply said, if that's not a prohibition, I wouldn't know a prohibition if I saw one. I was getting a very good review, actually, of the book in the leading evangelical newspaper in England. The reviewer was quite taken with the book, actually, till he came to that part.

And he said, the writer tends to be dogmatic. The publisher copied that out and showed it to me and underlined, Stanley Barnes bought me a book and he says, we all know that you tend to be dogmatic. He wrote that, and I said, you know, I take that as an insult.

I do not tend to be dogmatic. I am dogmatic. And when the Bible says don't look at it, look, I'm just a simple Irish man.

If the Bible says don't look at it, it doesn't mean go and guzzle the stuff. And yet, yet, for the vast majority of those who are always talking about Christian liberty, the only liberty they're talking about is the liberty to drink alcohol or smoke tobacco. When I asked some of them some years ago, what will you do when they legalize pot? They had no answer.

The only reason for not smoking cannabis is it's against the law. Well, let me tell you, it's not going to be against the law for very long. Already in Europe, in many places, it's perfectly legal.

If they haven't already done it, they're just about to do it in England. So you can go out and smoke pot just as legally as you can go out and smoke tobacco. And if the law of the land is the only reason for not doing it, we're now going to have a race of preachers getting up to establish Christian liberty to smoke pot.

God helped the cause of Christ when the Reformed churches have got to this. Because you know, Christian liberty, whatever you think of the how you should exegete the Scriptures that deal with alcohol, and I quite realize that there are other forms of exegesis that challenge what I say. I think they're wrong.

But whatever you think of that, when Christ makes His people free, the freedom that He gives them is twofold fundamentally. Number one, it is the freedom from having to establish a righteousness by their own works that would merit acceptance with God. It is freedom from the covenant of works.

And secondly, it is freedom from human impositions upon their conscience. It is freedom from the traditions of men. Luther, when he stood before the diet of worms, said, my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

A conscience captive to the Word of God. So that the decrees of popes and of councils, the statements of priests or of pastors, the conclusions of confessions of faith are all brought down to the touchstone of the Scriptures of truth. And it is not what the confession of faith says that binds the heart.

It is what the Word of God teaches that binds the conscience. Nothing else. I believe our confession of faith to be a true reflection and exposition of the teaching of the Word of God.

But I believe that not because of the authority of the confession, but because of the authority of the Bible to which I have subjected it in my new examination. Christ makes His people free. We sometimes sing the

song free from the law.

Oh happy condition! That is not free from obeying the law of God. It is free from the law as a covenant of works. Free from the law as the means of earning our way to heaven.

Free from its curse. Free from its condemnation. That's what it is.

Christ makes His people free. Now this liberty, as the text makes clear, is under constant attack. Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the Church of Rome had done such a successful job in opposing the Christian liberty that Paul is speaking about here, that for about a thousand years, few people even dreamed that such a liberty existed.

During the Reformation, the Church of Rome made the most strenuous efforts and employed every weapon in her arsenal to crush the preaching of the Gospel and the promulgation of this doctrine of the liberty of the Christian man. That attack has never lessened. Free justification.

By free, I mean what Paul meant in Romans chapter 3, verse 24, being justified freely. That is gratuitously. That's a big word.

We will use that word again when I get finally to return to the series of messages in Romans. We'll be at Romans 3.22 next time, God willing. And that word gratuitous is a very important word in the doctrine of justification.

Being justified freely, gratuitously, that is without any cause in us by anything that we have done, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The Bible tells us a threefold cord is not easily broken. Here are the three parts of the cord.

Justified freely. The Greek has been translated in John 15.26 without a cause. Justified freely.

Justified by grace. Justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This doctrine of free justification is the very heart of the Gospel.

Without this, there is no Gospel. There is no talk of pardon. There is no hope of grace.

There is no ground of acceptance. There is no doctrine of reconciliation. At least scriptural doctrine.

There is nothing left of the Gospel unless we hold to this doctrine of a free justification received by faith alone. This doctrine today is an almost unknown truth. If you want to prove that, listen up.

You tell me the number of churches in Greenville. And I am not saying this because Greenville is the worst of places. I believe in all America there is not a better place.

This is still the buckle on the Bible belt. Many churches in Greenville, out of all the hundreds and hundreds that we have, teach their people the doctrine of a free justification. How many? I guarantee the number in comparison to the total is minuscule.

And then if you go to the preachers who actually mention justification or who quote a text on justification and listen very carefully and ask yourself, does that preacher begin to understand the import of the phrase that Paul uses again and again, the righteousness of God. Does he understand it? In fact, most preachers who mention it haven't a clue in the world as to what it imports. They mix it up with the eternal attribute of

God's being, that He is a righteous God.

And in some way or other, God transfers His eternal attribute of righteousness to us. It's crazy. It's crazy.

It's unscriptural. It's not the gospel. The righteousness of God in justification of which Paul speaks, that righteousness which is imputed to us is the righteousness of Christ's obedience.

Study Romans 5:17-19 and you'll see that. It is the righteousness of Christ's obedience. It is the merit of Christ's fulfillment of the law as a covenant of works for Him in order that He should establish for us a covenant of grace.

This doctrine is almost unknown. And once more millions are being brought under bondage to human traditions or as happens in many evangelical churches to people who have sincerely and I might say successfully sought Christ for saving grace. They're being manipulated by human authority apart from Scripture.

I don't want to get off on a rabbit trail. You know me, if you come here, I never like to do that because I make rabbit trails into super highways and stay on them for a long time. I have had people come visit this church and go out thinking I'm an apostate because I don't have 15 minutes of singing just as I am and put your hand up for this and put your hand up for that.

If you haven't got your hand up to be saved, you end up, if you've ever had a mother, a father, a grandmother, a grandfather, if you've ever had a head or a toe, put your hand up. You know these preachers that must get their hand up for something. So they go out saying he doesn't make an appeal.

I never finish a service without an appeal because the Word of God demands a response. And I ask for that response. But here's the thing.

Here's the strange thing. These, and this is what I talk about being manipulated by the traditions of man. There are people who will go out picking holes because I don't have the kind of appeal that was never known in the Christian church throughout the first 90% of its existence.

Never known in it. But they can sit in churches where in 30 years they have never once heard the exposition of the doctrine of a free justification by the imputation of the merits of Jesus Christ received by faith alone. They have never once heard it.

And it never bothers their conscience. That's only one example of manipulation. I could give you many.

And you'll find our evangelical and fundamental ideas. To be honest, I've sat in Reformed churches where the same thing has been done. Where there's a manipulation of the people to do what the preacher wants them to do by heaping guilt upon them, hiding from the people the freedom of the justified man.

What is it? It is again the attack upon the liberty of the gospel. And of course there is an even bigger attack because today various ecumenical, if you're not aware of the word, ecumenical comes from a Greek word that means the inhabited earth. It speaks of something bringing the world together.

Ecumenical activities that proceed on the basis of the denial or the dilution of Paul's gospel of justification. The ecumenical activities of the Protestant churches have since, well, a long way before 1948, they were in train, but since 1948 they have been headed up by the World Council of Churches and its National Councils of Churches. The World Council has had to reassess its role.

I'm not going to preach on that tonight. It's still a major enemy of the purity of the gospel. But there are others, ecumenical activities.

There's a charismatic aspect to ecumenism. One of the fathers of the modern charismatic movement said that to be truly charismatic you must be ecumenical. To be truly ecumenical you should be charismatic.

Many charismatics have used their common experience, a spurious one by the way, professed experience of the Holy Spirit, especially their speaking in tongues which are not even remote cousins of the gift of tongues in the New Testament, which were the gift of foreign languages. They used this common experience to bring Roman Catholics and Protestants, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, Pentecostals, all together on the basis of a shared delusive experience, but on the basis of the rejection, denial or delusion of the gospel that Paul preached. The battle is underway.

The tragedy is very few people realize where the battle lines are truly drawn. When you look at Galatians 5 verse 1 you must say that the liberty that Christ gave us must be maintained without compromise. He says stand fast in this liberty, be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

Now this text therefore has a message that we as Christians need to pay particular attention to. As I said, Paul's themes in Galatians became some of the most compelling issues that drove the Protestant Reformation. But if there was a Reformation, and there was, there was also and has continued to be a Counter-Reformation.

The Counter-Reformation is the name given to Rome's attempt to nullify, to reverse and ultimately to remove all the gains and indeed all the signs of the Protestant Reformation. And the Counter-Reformation has never really stopped. It is in full swing today.

Today it's being prosecuted not only by the Vatican, but by a number of compromising Protestants who are heavily engaged in ecumenical dialogue or collaboration with the Church of Rome. And somebody like Chuck Colson will put their argument very cogently. The argument is that in the face of rampant secularism, we cannot afford to maintain our historic differences with Rome and our rejection of Rome as a Christian Church.

We can't afford to do that. If you want to know just how vitriolic the opposition to the historic Protestant stand can be, cast your mind back a little to the last presidential election. When the president of Bob Jones University had the temerity, and I thank God for this, to say that the Church of Rome was not a Christian Church and have the university website accurately deal with it as an unbiblical cult.

And I admire him for taking that stand. Thank God for the courage in at least one recognizable leader in fundamentalism to have enough gumption to tell the truth on this matter. But man, once he did so, the furies were let loose.

John McCain, that mighty senator of ill repute, that demagogue of the worst order, stooping to the business of lies and hypocrisy, did all he could to turn the resources of the U.S. Congress, of the media, of the Church of Rome, against this one institution. Why? It had nothing to do with Bob Jones' dating policy. Liar McCain knew about that dating policy for years.

It only became an issue when Dr. Bob had the temerity to say Rome is not a Christian Church. People like Colson will tell you we can't afford to take that stand. Look at the number of Roman Catholics there are in the world.

We need them to fill out our ranks in the battle against secularism. We can't afford to cut off Rome. I want to tell you the truth is we can't afford not to.

According to the Word of God, Rome is the perpetual enemy of truth and liberty. I freely admit that there are instances throughout history of individual Roman Catholics, of heroic vision and action for which we would have to thank God. But Rome as a system has never been the friend of liberty, whether you're talking about evangelical liberty, social liberty, political liberty, or national liberty.

Rome has never, never been the seedbed of liberty. And in the Bible's prophesied climax of the end of the age and the events surrounding it, Rome appears as the harlot queen of the man of sin, the greatest destroyer of life and liberty in the history of the world. The Reformers saw all that.

The Reformers believed all that. The Reformers acted on the truth of these propositions. What I'm saying is that we need to recapture the spirit of the Reformers and maintain the work that they commenced.

I say commenced, because they never thought for a moment that they had finished the work of the Reformation. They spoke of the church as reformed, yet always reforming. In other words, not living in the past.

Some of the reformed have the tendency always to want to go back to the 16th century. But we're not to live in the past. We are always to be responding to the current situation in the light of the immutable truths of the gospel so as to ensure our continuing conformity to the Word and will of God.

That's the call of our text. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. I want you to think with me of maintaining the truth, the cause, and the benefits of the Protestant Reformation.

Now, I have to be honest that there are people here who have not been at Reformation Month services. You've not heard me or Dr. Pinozzi or any of our other speakers deal with the history of the Reformation in England or in Scotland or in Germany or anywhere else. You may have heard some strange things about the Reformation.

I get things sent to me, and no doubt after this I'll get a few more things sent to me by self-appointed historians who have as much sense in reading history as I have in reading Double Dutch. And so you may have heard some strange things about the Reformation. What was it? As we'll see, it was a multifaceted movement or series of events.

But fundamentally, the Reformation was a mighty work of God. When you read history, and by the way, I hope you will, I know that there are some pin-headed people and forgive my being blunt, but I don't have time to talk around the bush. Some pin-headed people who believe that it's not the job of a church to deal with history.

You want to read your Bible again? It commands it. So, read a little history. Don't think you're an expert just because you've read a few chapters of one book.

I've been reading history for many years, and I am far from being a historian. In fact, when I look at these professional historians, I see three or four of them over here, when I look at these professional historians, I'm sure they go home at times trembling, like, well, I don't know, be like jelly or with anger, or with ee-ah. You know, I know when Dr. Barrett, being a linguist, hears somebody get up to say the Hebrew says and the Greek says and they get it all mixed up, he just, ooh, he, he just feels turned up inside.

And they may well feel the same when I deal with history. I'm still right, mind you, and they're wrong, but we'll not get into that. The 16th century was a time of seething motion and commotion.

It was a rowdy century. It was a century in which Europe began to stir from a 1,000 year long sleep of darkness and death. In many ways, it marked the transition from the medieval world to the modern world as nations began to take shape and to struggle toward the liberties that we now take for granted.

Now, there were many engines of change in those days. You will read of the Renaissance. I want you to notice how I pronounce that for your benefit.

We were taught to pronounce it properly. The Renaissance. But whatever it was, you've heard of that.

Bringing with it a new interest in ancient culture and writing and civilization. You've heard about the invention of printing, movable type printing. And all that was certainly a mighty, mighty engine of change.

But the mightiest engine of change in the 16th century was the Protestant Reformation. And the men who led it were the most important men in the world whose work was the most enduring. It was as a movement, it challenged the old order based on the false claims of the papacy that the Pope was the successor of Peter, the vicar of Christ, the God-appointed head of the church, that he was also king of all earthly kings with the right given by God and confirmed by the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century to exercise sovereign power over the nations.

The donation of Constantine actually turned out to be a forgery along with the Isidorean decretals. If you want more about those, you'll have to read my dictionary or something else. But on the forgery, the Pope was the king of earthly kings, the right to set up one, to pose another, and indeed to rule as an earthly ruler.

The Reformation opposed the Roman church as the true expression of the New Testament church, as the bride of Christ, as Rome thought herself, the guardian of divine truth outside of which there was no salvation. That was the movement of the Reformation. It was a movement for God and for His truth.

As I have indicated in the preamble, popular view with a lot of truth in it is that it started October 31, 1517 when Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg. Luther hadn't a notion in the world of overthrowing the Pope when he did that. Luther really believed the Pope doesn't know what's going on here in his name.

If only we can get some scholarly debate, the Holy Father will see this and he's going to move and things will change. Luther was a devoted Roman Catholic. But it did start a mighty change.

The story, the stirring story of his stand against indulgences, his increasing study of Scripture, his increasing eminence as a theologian and expositor of the Word of God led up to his heroic stand in 1521 when he went as a lonely monk to the Diet of Worms on trial. Although he had been given safe conduct, he knew it was not worth the paper on which it was written. It's often said, and I think Dr. Pinozian is right here, that when Luther stood up, he did not boom out like a mighty thunder.

Here I stand, I can do no other. So help me God. I think it's probably true that with great simplicity, with deep humility, with a great deal of physical fear, Luther quietly said, Here I stand, I can do no other.

So help me God. But you know, I never think of those words said in a whisper. And however Martin Luther said them, they were not a whisper.

And I'll tell you why. I think of a man with pounding heart and trembling hand, putting a match to a mighty pile of dynamite. However timid and trembling the hand, the resultant explosion rocked the world.

That's what Luther did. And however he originally said it, this is one of the most momentous statements ever made by mortal man. This is one of the most thunderous outbursts of truth and oratory ever to move the minds of men.

And ever since, men have been stirred with the sight of the lonely Augustinian monk facing the legates of the Pope, the princes of the realm, the powers of church and state arrayed for his destruction and thunderously challenging them with the Word of God, saying, I'm bound to this book. Here I take my stand. I can do nothing else.

God help me. That was the thunder that marked the beginning and mighty progress of the Reformation. Luther's writings spread like fire across Europe.

They invaded the great universities of Europe. They laid hold of the minds of some of the brightest and best young men in Europe. Soon, the whole continent was ablaze with the controversy of Luther and the doctrine of Paul.

But though that may be said to be the beginning, this is a work that ran deep in history. Behind Luther stood an army of Protestants before their time. Savonarola was a reformer more of moral values and social action.

There were others going deeper into history. Robert Grossetest, Bradwardine, Gutschalk, people who took a stand on individual issues. There were others of greater importance, men like John Huss and Jerome of Prague, behind whom stood the great English man of God and man of letters, John Wycliffe.

These were proto-Protestants. You had groups like the Albigenses, the Catharoi, as they're called. History dismisses them as all sorts of half-lunatic heretics.

Remember, almost everything we know about them is the description given by Roman Catholic cardinals who have never in history been known for telling the truth. These were people who wanted purity of life. And I'm sure it's true that they missed the boat doctrinally in many issues.

When I think of the darkness that they were struggling out of, I thank God for their desire for the Gospel to have an effect in holy living. Most of all, behind the Reformation stood the Waldensians. Perhaps the real trunk of the ancient church of which the Church of Rome was but an outgrowth and an aberration.

The Reformation wasn't an innovation, it was a restoration of ancient orthodoxy. It had immediate effects, powerful effects on the social, economic, political, national and international stage in the 16th century. It brought upheavals to Europe as popes fought to hold on to their wealth and their privilege and power.

As some princes seized the opportunity in order to dilute papal power and enrich themselves as Henry VIII did at the cost of the Roman church. And as other princes rose up to defend the pope's authority and privilege. In other words, the Reformation was either the cause or the catalyst for the convulsions that rocked the world in the 16th century.

So it was a many-faceted movement but most of all it was spiritual. I want you to remember this, its authority was Scripture. Its message was free justification by faith in the merits of Christ.

Its aims were the glory of God and the good of the souls of men. Its genius lay in its appeal to men of every station. And its results remained with us until this very day.

The Gospel was preached and churches to preach it were established all over Europe. There was the formation of societies of free men, subject only to the Word of God. And millions from then till now have been saved because of the restoration of the Gospel in the 16th century.

It was not a tidy movement. We tend to idealize the things that we admire. I must say I would love to be able to idealize the Protestant Reformation.

It was not a tidy movement. It was not a flawless movement. With hindsight, see its easy to criticize people way back in history.

You see this, you've seen it in the Gulf War and now the Iraqi War. You know all these armchair generals, they can sit there and they can say what to do, what not to do. He made this mistake, he made the other mistake.

Most of these pundits, you know, they know nothing what they're talking about. You can do that with history. For me to criticize Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Knox and Latimer and Ridley it's a flea barking at elephants.

With hindsight we can say there was too much needless division and let us learn that lesson today. Luther was a mighty man but he was a headstrong stubborn mule. When he met Ulrich Zwingli and they disagreed on the meaning of this is my body and Luther came up with his own unique incredible version of the meaning of the words he would not even shake hands with the man who had done in Switzerland for the cause of Christ exactly what he had done in Germany.

There was far too much needless division. At times there was too ready a reliance on princes and on the powers that be. At times they were too slow the reformers to see the full implications of their own teachings and that's why at times there were persecutions of dissenters.

When you go to Zurich to this day you are delighted to remember you stand where Zwingli stood. I stood in the house he was born in. I stood in the church that he preached in.

Then I looked at the river where he drowned the Anabaptists. All there were flaws but for all its flaws the reformation was a powerful spiritual movement marked by heroic deeds of courage and of consecration. My argument tonight is that the cause of the reformation must be maintained by us today.

Because it's the cause of Christ and his gospel and the cause of liberty. As I pointed out the benefits of the gospel are under assault. Rome has found new energy and fresh apologists.

All their arguments are the same as they've always been but they're getting a certain degree of success. Why? Well, there's a general ignorance of reformed theology. And second the leaven of Arminian theology which is forgive the introduction of theological terms it's what we call in theology semi-Pelagianism which is the official doctrine of the Church of Rome.

And Arminianism therefore has led to the opening of doors by imbuing the minds of Protestant people with a perversion of truth so close to the Roman Catholic. It doesn't seem much reason to stand against Rome other than bigotry. Standing against Rome out of bigotry is unworthy of a Christian.

Standing against Rome out of devotion to Christ and his gospel is entirely worthy of a Christian. In the face of all the opposition the gospel is facing today, the need is obvious. We need to see the importance of the issues involved and give ourselves to maintain the cause.

But as we close tonight I want you to go home with this in your mind. It's not my job or my intention to teach you history. Oh it has its value but only if it has an effect today.

To maintain the cause of the Reformation we must actively promote the truths and the principles that undergirded it. Now there's a big subject and I don't get into it tonight. What were the principles and truths of the Reformation? Would it surprise you if I told you that Martin Luther congratulated Erasmus by telling him, Erasmus you are the only man to put your finger on what the real issue of the Reformation is.

Here's the surprising thing it was not sola scriptura the Bible only as our authority. It was not justification by faith alone. It was not the priesthood of all believers.

Now those are very important Reformation truths but Erasmus put his finger on what he said was the nub of the matter and Luther said you are the only man to get it right. What was it? It was Luther's and later Calvin's and every other Reformers doctrine of the bondage of the human will. Erasmus wrote on free will.

Luther wrote one of his greatest works bombastic in places but brilliant in its presentation the truth of the depravity of man and the utter sovereignty of God in his regeneration and salvation. We need to get back to a proper view of God and man. We need to maintain the solas of the Reformation sola scriptura the Bible only as our authority.

Grace alone by grace are you saved through faith alone not mixed with works in Christ alone to the glory of God alone the five solas of the Reformation we need to get back to maintaining them. We need to get back to Christian liberty living in liberty without license knowing that every Christian is a priest with a right to go directly to God and to bring anything presented to him to the touchstone of scripture to instruct his conscience and yet not living in anarchy.

It's just not good enough what's happening in Protestantism today that one opinion is as good as another do you notice what's happening when people come to the Bible they say well now what this says to me is hold a second I don't want to disrespect you but with all the respect in the world I don't really care what this says to you nor should you care what this says to me what we're dealing with there is pure unadulterated unfettered human imagination I have people come to me with a text of scripture do you see what this says to me well if the Bible says that to them I must say it can mean anything to anybody the Protestant Reformation got to this what does the Bible mean by what it says that's the part what does God intend us to see here that's the thing that matters we're not looking for

anarchy we're looking for liberty without license we need to have an undying opposition to all people and anti-Christian pretenses it's not for nothing that the reformers unitedly fingered the Pope as anti-Christ was that because they were bigots no, they took this Bible they realized there are many anti-Christ and this is certainly one of them and he's the big one up until now they saw the portrait of anti-Christ they looked up and they saw the Pope and they said man that's identical we've got to have a total commitment for the

spread of the gospel through preachers sold out to him that's what the reformers did now listen, it cost some of them their lives it cost others every comfort of life but God crowned their labors and you're here tonight because of what those men did and those

women too you're here tonight because of what they did what we need is to commit ourselves to something worth living for and that's the sustaining and the maintaining of the cause of Jesus Christ I said at the beginning there's a crisis of need for young men this church is not exempt but we do have a vision, we do have a burden and I tell you quite honestly the only reason the Free Presbyterian Church is in existence today is the maintenance and the spread of the cause of God as it was expressed through the Protestant Reformation that's going right back to the Bible, we go back through Calvin and Luther and the others right to Paul it's the same truth I wonder if you ever caught the vision for such a work what are you going to do with your life you young fellows what are you going to do

with your life if you go on the way you're going is what you're doing really worth living for will it mean anything when you stand before God now I want to speak to you as a Protestant the old Puritan ethic that all legitimate labor is sanctified and is worthy of a Christian do not misunderstand me God does not intend everybody to be a preacher and the labor of every Christian if it is moral and legitimate is worthy of a Christian whether you're brushing the streets stocking the shelves of a grocery store doing people's accounts hate to say this even taking their taxes teaching, whatever worthy of a Christian but I fear there are some on whose heart God has placed a burden before whose eyes God has placed a vision of greater things but the way seems hard the pay seems small the

difficulties seem enormous more and more young men are turning aside to the safe way as it appears when the cry goes up for men sold out to God a cry to be a soldier in the greatest army in the greatest battle of all the ages a cry to be a saint a cry that's the need may God raise you stir your heart that you may come with Paul newly converted and ask what Christ would have you to do let's bow our heads in prayer tonight as I said I would at the beginning I've taken liberties with time and I'm going to take one more liberty before I close with prayer I want you to take that burning question in your heart in your lips before the Lord Lord what would you have me to do here's my life you've purchased it with precious blood fill me with your spirit and use me as you will and if perchance

you're here tonight without Christ you know nothing about being justified set free from guilt your guilt is still as big as a mountain and as black as the pit still far from God and you know no pardon or peace what I've given you is history that changed the world it's not just history it's truth that can change you if you're not saved I invite you to Christ come and let me open the book with you to point you to the Son of God the only Savior of sinners Father in Heaven bless thy word set souls free in Christ tonight and those whom thou hast set free keep them free from every entanglement the old yoke of bondage God raise up a race of preachers prophetic men who will fearlessly take their stand for King Jesus prosper the cause of the gospel we ask of thee in Jesus name part us now with thy

blessing may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior the love of God our Heavenly Father the fellowship of the Holy Spirit our sanctifier and comforter be our portion now and evermore Amen

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