

The Testimony of Jesus

Part 7

Lord, we are so thankful for the privilege we had today of in a very fresh way beholding You, and we are always touched that no matter how many times in the past, every day we behold You. When we come into Your presence and we look upon You, we get another glimpse of the height, the depth, the length, the width of who You are, and we worship You for that, Lord. And we are thankful too that as we come to Your Word, as we look throughout history, we can also see You because Lord, it is Your story. It is the way that You have been moving through Your saints throughout the centuries. As we always pray, we are not here just to learn facts but we want to see You. We want to behold the Lamb of God, moving against the great force that would try to destroy the testimony of Jesus. We are thankful, Lord, for Your faithfulness, for faithful saints who have upheld Your testimony throughout these years, and we desire that they would be an encouragement to us in these days. In Jesus 'name. Amen.

As we continue in this series, obviously because of time I cannot take time to go back and review; we would spend the whole time in reviewing. The purpose of the series and the history of it is all on YouTube so you can go back and listen again.

The heart of what we are looking at is really the testimony of Jesus, and when we speak of the testimony of Jesus in a simplistic way, we are just speaking of His life being expressed through His saints, His life being seen, Him being seen as the all-sufficient One, He being seen as the all in all, His life being seen and lived out through brothers and sisters. That is what He has desired throughout the ages. That is what He is desiring of us today, that His very character and nature as it is formed within His people, as that great transforming work is done that the Life of Christ would be seen. Even though we are looking at people we are looking beyond. We are looking at His life in them, and that is the encouragement we have.

As we start today there is a verse in Ecclesiastes 3:14 that caught my heart.

"I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him."

That word encouraged me so much because as you see throughout history, we saw ones like last time with the Reformation. They gained some ground, they saw some truths, they beheld the Lord in a fresh way, but they also fell short. But praise God, the ground they gained, the material they have went into that eternal city. The gold went into the city. Or another phrase you might say, the bride was making herself ready. Every time God is able to work and move, that is an eternal work. God's work is eternal, and when He does it, it stays in eternity and in that city, and nothing can take away from it. Praise God for that!

We will also see as we continue on that the recovery work God is doing is progressive. As one sees something and others see something else, it is progressive, but it is always upon the same foundation—Christ and Him crucified. This is the foundation of which every work of God is

being done. There is a beautiful example of this in the Old Testament about the materials that go into the temple.

Materials for the Temple

I Chronicles 26:26-27: "This Shelomoth and his relatives had charge of all the treasures of the dedicated gifts, which King David and the heads of the fathers' households, the commanders of thousands and hundreds, and commanders of the army, had dedicated. They dedicated part of the spoil won in battles to repair the house of the LORD."

Praise God, all of these dear ones were adding things, and it was going into the house of the Lord. But that section does not end there. There is another verse.

Verse 28: "And all that Samuel the seer had dedicated and Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner and Joab the son of Zeruiah, everyone who had dedicated anything, all of this was in the care of Shelomoth and his relatives."

Now this can kind of strike you as strange all of a sudden because we can think of all that David did going into the house and all of his followers and all of David's men. But all of a sudden, it is talking about the work that Saul did went into the house. We generally do not think of Saul as a great spiritual man, but the bit of work that Saul did went into the temple, the bit that Abner did. Abner was Saul's commander-in-chief. He eventually went over to David and Joab killed him, but that work he did went into the house. Sometimes Joab was for David and sometimes he was against him. He was such a character, but that work he did, that material went into the house.

That was a warning to me in my heart. Sometimes I judge what is going into the house. What that person is doing is not going into the house. And it really convicted my heart that we do not see. The Lord sees ones' hearts; He sees the work that is done. So as we look around Christianity today, we need to be careful about judging what is going into the eternal house of God because the ones we might not suspect would be adding material to the house that God sees in a different way. He sees the hearts. So I took these verses as a warning and also an encouragement that everything He does through any of us it says at the end of verse 28: "... everyone who had dedicated anything." Praise God for that all-inclusive word. Sometimes we can think: "What worth am I? What am I doing?" Praise God, every little bit that He is working in each one of our lives is going into that city. It is going into that process of the bride being made ready.

The impact of the Reformation

The last time we looked at the impact of the Reformation, and we are thankful how through the Reformation the authority of the Word of God was recovered. When we are speaking of the Word of God, we are speaking of the living Word of God. We are not talking about a mental apprehension. But the Word of God captured lives and changed those lives. It recovered the truth of justification by faith, and it brought believers into direct access to God instead of having to go through a priest or an intermediary.

We also saw there were great shortcomings. They saw the priesthood of all believers, but they did not practice it, they did not enter into it. They continued to believe and practice in a very strong way infant baptism. They also formalized worship plans for Sunday. A couple of people afterwards asked me about that, so this is Calvin's worship plan back in 1500:

Call to worship, confession of sin (prayer), and a brief absolution.

Read the Scripture.

Sing a Psalm.

Pastor prays again.

The sermon.

Prayer of intercession after the sermon.

Sing a Psalm and Benediction.

Some things have not changed in a few hundred years. But we are thankful that there are changes that do occur, but that is the way it was set up back then. And you can see that once man sets something up it can just stay in place. You might tweak it a little bit here and there. Calvin liked to sing psalms, others liked to sing hymns. So there are variations.

We also saw how the Protestants ended up allying themselves with kings and princes, and from that came the state and national churches. I was talking to a brother recently, and he told me that he was born into the Lutheran Church in Norway. If you are born in Germany, you are born into the Lutheran Church. Thank God we are born again into *the* church. Eventually we will see today how the persecuted became the persecutors.

Religious Wars of the Reformation

As we look at this period of time after the Reformation, post Reformation 16th century, first we are going to look at a couple of things to set the scenes. We will look at the religious wars that are going on in Europe and the Roman Catholic counter-Reformation.

It is sad that during this time many religious wars were going on throughout Europe starting from the Peasants' Revolt, then the Kappel Wars where Zwingli was killed. That was between the Catholics and the Protestants in Switzerland.

The Smalcald War which was in Germany, and again it was between Protestants and the Holy Roman Empire. The Protestants were defeated, but the Lutherans became legalized, and there was a precedent set down at the end of this war that everybody recognized. It was the *Cuius Regio, Eius Religio*. It means "whose realm, his religion." If you are ruling and if it is your realm, you set the religion, and they all agreed to it. So if the king says we are going to be Catholic, we are going to be a Catholic Church. If the king says we are going to be Protestant, we are going to be a Protestant Church, and we are not going to fight about it. This is the way it was set, and that is what happened. It is not a great thing, but it brought peace.

Then we have the Dutch Revolt. Actually, there was something called the Netherlands back at that time, and to settle the fight the Protestants got Holland and the Catholics got Belgium. That is why we see Holland today as more of a Protestant country and Belgium still remains Catholic. We are thankful for that.

The significant war that kind of ended this period was the Thirty Years War, and it ended with what is called the Peace of Westphalia. During this time the Holy Roman Empire lost a significant amount of its power and was never as powerful after that. And the boundaries within the countries of Europe were more or less set. They were kind of like what they are today. Through the wars there have been some little bickerings and changes, but in general the boundaries were set. Also, since much of the battle occurred in Germany it was devastated during that time. Germany was almost bankrupted because of the long period of wars.

In the end, generally there was a freedom of religion for Protestants and Catholics. Protestants were free to worship; Catholics were free to worship, but anybody else outside of those two realms such as the Lutheran Church or the Calvinistic Church, the Reform Church, or something else, did not have the freedom to worship. That is where we will see a lot of things occurring today. Because of this if you were in a Protestant country, the Jesuits which were of the Catholic Church were excluded from Protestant land. All of this was going on during this framework of what we are looking at today. There were battles going back and forth, and it was not a very settled society in this period of time.

Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation

Also, after the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had a Counter-Reformation. They saw that people were leaving so they said they had to do something. It generally ran from the Council of Trent to the end of the Thirty Years 'War. It was a threefold purpose that they had. They wanted to enhance the spiritual life within the Roman Catholic Church and eliminate abuses. That was what the Council of Trent did. They eliminated some abuses, such as the abuse of indulgences and some other things they were trying to clean up, but they did not change any of their teachings. What occurred within this time of trying to renew a spiritual life within were individuals coming forth who are generally called the mystics. There is St. John of the Cross, and one of the books by him is "The Dark Night of the Soul." There was St. Teresa of Avila and St. Frances of Sales. There were ones coming forth within the church, and they saw that they could not change the whole church but they themselves could live a private, spiritual Christian life with the Lord. Some came out, and some stayed in.

Also, the goal was to stop the spread of Protestantism and win ones back to the Roman Catholic Church. This was not a voluntary coming back; this was done by force. The key figure in this was Ignatius Loyola founder of "The Society of Jesus" better known as the Jesuits. They could use any means they wanted to in order to bring people back into the Roman Catholic Church at that time. And that created a lot of conflicts and battles.

Also, the purpose was to continue to spread the faith to other areas like a good marketing plan. They saw that in the little area they were working in they had almost covered most of Europe. So they decided they needed to expand their market throughout the rest of the world,

and they headed out to Asia and the Americas. Matteo Ricci went to China, Frances Xavier to India and Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Franciscan missionaries came over to New Spain. Now for the history buffs, New Spain at that point in time was Mexico, Southwest US, Louisiana and Florida which was all Spanish territory at that time. So they sent many missionaries over at that point to convert and bring ones to Catholicism.

Was the Counter-Reformation successful? It all depends upon your perspective. From the Catholic Church they thought it was very successful. They expanded their base and said, "Look, we cleaned things up." I do not want to be too disrespectful but it was like they washed the pig. You farmers will know what I mean. They put lipstick on the pig, but it was still the pig. They may have stopped the spread of Protestantism in Europe, but they did not stop the spread of the testimony of Jesus. That is the key thing. From their perspective it was successful, but from a spiritual perspective it was not successful at all.

The Radical Reformation

The Anabaptists

The radical reformation was a name given by historians to ones who were so radical that they would leave the established church. The first group we have is the Anabaptists. They saw that the reformers had not gone far enough. They rejected the church state alliances and infant baptism. The church is only made up of those who are born again which to us sounds normal, but that was a very dramatic statement at that time, and they only called themselves Christians. You find that most of these groups have a name given to them, but these ones just called themselves Christians. And they ended up being persecuted both by Catholics and Protestants.

Anabaptist just means to rebaptize or baptize again. They were given the name Anabaptists because they believed only in believers' baptism. At that point in time everybody believed in infant baptism, but the Anabaptists said only believers were to be baptized. So in the world's point of view if you were a believer and you got baptized again, that was being baptized again or being rebaptized. They also had a contention with the reformers on this matter of the relationship of church and state.

The original Anabaptists began in Switzerland, and many of them were students of Zwingli. They had Bible studies together, they prayed together, they had great fellowship together, and Zwingli was one who encouraged them in the Lord and in their spiritual growth. Others were Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, Felix Manz, and other ones. They were students of Zwingli, but as they got into the word more and more they started coming into some conflicts with Zwingli and some of the reformers at that time because Zwingli believed in infant baptism and he believed in the church-state relationship. They read in the Scriptures that this was not right, and they began separating themselves from Zwingli. At this point they did not have to meet totally in secret, but they had to meet discreetly. They had to be a little more careful of how they were meeting.

One evening in 1525 there was a group of them meeting for just a time of prayer, and they were humbling themselves before the Lord in prayer in a great way. The Spirit of the Lord came upon George Blaurock and he felt convicted. He said, "I need to be baptized." As they had studied

the Scriptures he saw that he needed to be baptized. And he looked to Grebel and said, “Will you baptize me?” Now in the past only the pastors or the officials could baptize. But neither one of these guys were either one of those, so we are actually beginning to see the priesthood of all believers, the functioning of every brother and sister. Grebel baptized Blaurock, and in the end Blaurock baptized Grebel and a few others in the room who wanted to be baptized.

Now at this time they were sprinkled. The battle was not between sprinkling and dunking; the battle was between infant baptism and believers’ baptism. We fight so much about sprinkling or dunking, but this was infant baptism versus real baptism of believers. So that was the key issue that began all of this, and it was beginning to spread throughout Zurich and Switzerland and having an impact. So the city council passed a law and said, “All children must be baptized, and if a child is not baptized the parents were going to be killed. So that kind of drew the line. That is why they were having to meet more and more in secret.

Later that year Eberli Bolt was the first Anabaptist martyr. He was burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic Church. He was caught preaching in the Catholic part of Switzerland, and he was executed immediately. Again, the city council in Zurich saw that even though they were making these laws people were continuing to go forth. And they spread the word that anybody who got rebaptized would be drowned. So they started drowning ones in the river and in the lake in Zurich. Tragically, Grebel who was very close to Zwingli and very influential died of the plague, but Felix Manz carried it on, and he carried it on with such a zeal that he was arrested and drowned. Felix Manz was the first martyr by the Protestants. So you have the first martyr by the Catholics and the first martyr by the Protestants here. So we see both of them are beginning to persecute this dear group. Manz was sentenced to death. The theory of the Zurich prosecutors decided punishment for the second baptism was a third baptism—drowning. They would bind their hands to their knees with a stick between the arms and the legs and throw them into the Limmat River in Zurich. His last words were: “Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.”

If you read Foxe’s Book of Martyrs or Martyrs Mirror, there are tremendous stories and testimonies of these ones. When they were dying and being persecuted, what they would share at the end was so powerful that it strengthened the saints, and many even came to the Lord through their persecutions. So they devised this thing called a tongue screw. They screwed the person’s tongue down so they could not say anything while they were being killed. Other times they would just kill people in secret because they saw the power of the testimony of ones dying, and they had to squelch it. They could squelch it, but they could not squelch the Spirit of God, and it kept moving. Praise God!

The Lord then raised up Michael Sattler. He was forced to leave where he was living and began serving throughout Germany and Switzerland. After this persecution they were having to meet more secretly, maybe in a home out in the country, in the woods or cave. They are really having to be very careful how they meet.

Then in 1527 they wanted to come together for a time of fellowship because they had never really come together and said, “Okay, who are we? And why do we gather?” And things like that. So they held this conference in the town of Schleithem to determine the nature of their faith.

Michael Sattler drafted this, and it is called generically "The Schleithem Confession" but they called it, "The Brotherly Union of Some Children of God." I loved that little title. It was a brotherly union of some children of God. That is all they were, and this is what they believed. They said, "We only baptize ones saved by the work of Christ, the church is a company of regenerate people whose daily lives are lived by the faith of what they profess, their fellowship is symbolized in the partaking of the Lord's supper, you should live a life separate from the sin of the world and from subservience to the flesh or anything that would compromise your faith. That was their testimony. Most of the time as you read about their gatherings, their prayer meetings, their times at the Lord's table, I think most of us would feel very comfortable there. The Spirit of it would be very similar to the freedom we have to gather. They gathered. They did not have the freedom that we do, but they were gathering on the same principle, and we are thankful for that.

As they were having this conference it was discovered by the authorities, and Sattler was tortured publicly, humiliatingly, and ended up being burned at the stake. His wife was caught, but she never recanted. They gave her eight days to recant, but she would not. So she was drowned, and someone took their children. Later on Blaurock got caught and was burned at the stake. After Blaurock was caught, Jacob Hutter took Blaurock's assembly and fled to Moravia. Eventually, they had to move to Slovakia. But the Hutterites are still in existence today. After some other persecutions the Hutterites moved into Ukraine, and when Russia took over Ukraine, they fled to the United States. So the Hutterites are still around today.

But the tremendous slaughter and persecution continued in a very terrible way. One of the ones who was killed has a precious testimony. It is Dirk Willems. Many people have heard of Dirk Willems. He was a prisoner, having been held in prison for a couple of years. Finally he escaped, and one of the guards at the prison was chasing him. There was a big lake next to the prison, and it was wintertime. Dirk started running across the lake, and the story is that he had been in prison so long that he did not weigh very much. He was a small guy and even though the ice was thin, he was able to make it. The guard who had been eating well, when he started chasing him fell into the lake and was drowning. Dirk stopped, went back, saved the guard and took him back to land, and they rearrested him. The guard actually pleaded for his life. "Please, just leave him in prison." They said no, and Dirk was executed about a week or two later. A person was chasing him and he saw him in trouble. He turned around and went back and saved him. That is a testimony of Jesus. That is the life of Christ. He loved not his own life literally unto death. He knew what would happen when he went back. That has always touched me in a very precious way.

Sadly, as the Anabaptists continued to grow and were spreading out, there was a group of them that settled in the city of Munster. They set up Munster as the new Jerusalem and said that they were all prophets. The leaders set up the city, and at first for a little bit everything worked great. It was like a new Jerusalem; it was Paradise. They were providing everything, but power corrupts. Soon these false prophets saw what they had, and they started taking advantage of the city. According to their prophecy, if they wanted someone else's wife they had the authority to annul a marriage and take that woman. If they liked your house, they could take your house. The

immorality, the debauchery, the abuses were tragic. Finally the Catholics came in, surrounded the city and destroyed it.

But what happened there put a stain on the testimony at that point in time because as ones were trying to share the gospel the other side would always say, “Just think about Munster. That is the people you are talking about, Munster.” It is like today. When someone who is a famous leader in the US or any of the churches is caught in immorality, it stains all of us, and the enemy uses that. The enemy successfully used the Munster thing to really thwart for a period of time the spread of the gospel. It was just tragic how they self-destructed there at Munster.

But praise God, the Lord raised up one called Menno Simmons. He was saved in the Netherlands and was part of the Catholic Church there. He started traveling throughout Germany and Switzerland, trying to restore and bring ones back to the Lord. Because of what had happened in Munster even many believers were deceived. They were discouraged and said, “How can something like this happen? We are all following the Lord.” He was able to bring them back together in unity, encourage them and strengthen them in the Lord to continue pressing on. Because of his success he had to flee Germany. He hid out many times throughout Switzerland and other places because the death sentence was on his head. But praise the Lord, he lived out a full life and died a natural death in 1559. He was really able to strengthen the ones there.

With each of these groups I am going to try to show their connection here in the U.S. In 1663 the first Mennonites, who did not call themselves Mennonites but were named that by other people, came to the U.S. and settled in Pennsylvania. In 1683 the Mennonites and Quakers established a place called Germantown, PA at William Penn’s invitation. The next time we will look at the Quakers. William Penn was a Quaker, and he came over with a land grant and was given the state of Pennsylvania. The king of England at that time was indebted to Penn’s father and to pay off a debt he gave Penn the state of Pennsylvania. He set it up as a refuge for saints, and we will see many go into that area.

There was a gap between 1543 and 1683. As the religious wars were going on between the Protestants and the Catholics, there was a little bit of relief given to the Anabaptists and the other believers at that time. They were so occupied with fighting each other that they put this aside for a while. But after that was settled it picked back up and the persecution was pretty intense. During the persecution which had continued for many years, some believers would deny the faith or they would go back to the Protestant Church. Once the persecution stopped they would go back and recommit themselves to the Lord, leave the Protestant Church and start meeting with the Mennonites again. And if persecution started they would go back to the safe place of the Protestant Church.

Well Jacob Ammann challenged ones returning. He said, “If you leave and deny the Lord, you are being shunned and you cannot come back.” The Mennonites were a little more gracious, and they said, “If one is generally repenting and comes back, we need to accept them.” So this was the basis for the separation between the Mennonites and the Amish. It was over ones who had denied the Lord or had left and gone back into a Protestant Church for a period of time. How do

you accept believers back after the persecution stops and you feel they genuinely want to come back? The Mennonites accepted them and the Amish said, "No." That was the first big division among the Anabaptists.

Any division is tragic because in any problem situation like that or any challenge we face, there is a way in the Lord through it. Now in that point of time, I do not know what the way would have been, but I know the Lord had a way for them, but they chose not to find His way and came up with their own way. Again, to me that is where the testimony of Jesus at that part becomes weaker and weaker through these various ones because of this division. Thank the Lord, the Anabaptists returned to that simplicity of Christ. They loved not their lives unto death, they believed in the priesthood of all believers, and we are very thankful for that.

We are familiar with the Mennonites and the Amish. The Mennonites came over in 1663, and the Amish came over in about 1730. If you look back at the original ones before this split under Menno Simmons, they did not have a particular dress code; they just dressed simply. They were not in fashion neither were they out of fashion. They were simple dressers. They wore maybe khaki slacks and a simple shirt. They were not trying to draw attention to themselves, so they did not have a strict dress code. They lived a simple life. They were in the world but not of the world. They were merchants, and they were not separated in little towns and clusters, but they were there as a testimony.

But sadly after some generations, the inward reality began fading away, and they started to comply more to an outward form and set up rules and regulations. We can start in a certain way with so much life. The first generation was convicted to dress very simply to show that they were not of the world. They were not trying to make a statement, and they did not set up a dress code. But sadly after some generations, it slowly changed, and if you wanted to be spiritual this is how you dress. If you wanted to be spiritual this is what you do, and whenever we start focusing more on the outward than the inward, we are in trouble. Tragically we see how ones have ended up.

When I am making general statements, I do not know anybody in the Mennonites or Amish people. There may be believers there and that is fine. I do not know. I am just pointing out some things; I am not condemning everybody. I know there are believers in the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches. All of these churches have believers there. I am trying to point out some things but not condemn ones.

The Huguenots

Now we will move over to France and the Huguenots. The Huguenots were originally called Gospelers. Later they were called Huguenots, but nobody knows where this term came from. If somebody says, "I know where it came from," they don't. We all know how it came about because of that road out there. They got named after our road. But nobody is really sure. There are three or four main theories but nothing for certain.

Calvinism and his work spread throughout France and thousands were saved. In 1559 they had their first conference together with all the Huguenots in Paris. Catherine de Medici was the queen powerhouse mother at that time. She tolerated them for a political gain because the Huguenots in general were the economy of the country. They were the merchants, the craftsmen

and the wine makers. So the economy of the country was centered around them and built upon them. There were some in nobility who were also in the Huguenots. So she saw the benefit of having them on her side, and she tolerated them. But sadly that did not last too long, and one of her generals had a massacre at Vassy which began the religious wars. One of the weaknesses of the Huguenots was that they signed a manifesto to take up and use arms. So they were not always the victim, but sometimes they were the aggressor. They would go into the Catholic areas and do to the Catholics what they were doing to them. This is not one of the high points of the Huguenots.

Their meetings were very simple like ours. They would have the table, breaking of bread, the worship, a sermon, prayer meetings, Bible studies in various homes. They started having to meet more and more in private, because they were under a lot of persecution. It was sad when they began to take up arms, and in 1562 some of them began to leave France. When you read the church history of the Huguenots, several times you will read of ones who were getting out of France because of the persecution. It is estimated that over 300,000 Huguenots left France, and that was a large number for a population back in that day and time.

The first Huguenot colony in the U.S. was settled in Florida in 1562. Tragically, in 1565 they were all massacred by the Spanish people. At that point Florida was the new Spain and the Spaniards did not want anybody from France coming in. So they reclaimed that ground for themselves.

Another area where the Huguenots made a mistake was a wedding between Henry VI, the Huguenot leader, and Marguerite, daughter of Catherine de Medici. This was done with a hope for peace. They said, "These two sides can marry and come together." It is like the Hatfields and the McCoys marrying together. Everything will work out very peaceful. So there was a hope for peace, but tragically there was a great betrayal about a week later. They were tricked into this whole situation, and they had the St. Bartholomew's day massacre. Over 100,000 Huguenots were killed throughout France, and it is called the greatest and darkest crime of the Christian era. The Catholics and the unbelievers were free to slaughter the Huguenots during that time. When you read some of the details, it says that they would kill them and throw them into the river. The river that runs through Paris which is called the Seine turned red with the blood of the saints. For three days, all throughout Paris and France this went on, and the fierceness of the enemy was so tragic it caused more and more people to leave.

Eventually, in 1585 the Huguenots and all Protestants were expelled from France, and this meant that the best and the brightest fled and it had a devastating impact upon the economy of France. Those who did not flee continued to meet privately and underground. Thank the Lord there were ones who stayed. Many fled but there were ones who stayed and through that time the testimony among them continued to grow and be strong, and more and more were coming to the Lord.

In 1598 they had the Edict of Nantes which restored religious freedom, so the persecution stopped for a while. But in 1620 the first Huguenots came to Virginia and settled around the York County area. Who knows where Elizabeth City, VA is? It is now called Hampton. That is where they first settled a little north of Hampton. That is where the Huguenots came to flee persecution

and have their religious freedom. They also set up establishments in New York, in New Rochelle and New Paltz. When the first ones came over in these areas, they were genuine believers who were seeking religious freedom, and they were standing for the testimony. Eventually, as time went on that began to fade and it turned more into a system. However, we are thankful for those first-generation believers who had a zeal for the Lord.

Today, if we wanted to move from the U.S. to another country, it would be some difficulty, but it would not be that challenging. Things would get accommodated, but it is kind of hard for us to even picture somebody leaving everything behind at their home in France and moving over here with absolutely nothing. Thankfully, the government here gave people land and places to settle. We are thankful these ones came.

Tragically, in 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edit of Nantes, and at that point in time they said the number that fled was up to 400,000. We actually spoke of this Edit of Nantes being revoked in one of our messages. It impacted the Waldenses also who lived in Northern Italy and Switzerland and were trying to be faithful. They are still in the picture at this time and still faithful to the Lord. Many of them are living in Moravia now, but the ones that were in the southern part of France at that point were persecuted again, and those faithful ones remaining in France were still called the Church of the Desert. And actually in Southern France today there is a little museum there, a little house. Elizabeth Schaffer visited it and sent me some information and a picture of the history of the Church in the Desert. It is a precious testimony that through all the persecution there were faithful ones still standing and gathering in the simplicity of Christ. It is amazing that the testimony of Jesus was preserved, and they are still sharing the gospel even though it could cost them their lives.

Later on there was a settlement in Charleston, and the first Huguenots came to Manakin, VA in 1700, and finally in 1793 the French Revolution gave all liberty of Conscience. There is a little marker on Huguenot Trail, Route 711, and it says, "The Huguenots were the largest single group of French Protestant refugees to come to Virginia and settled near here in the sight of the deserted Monacan Indian Village in 1700. The Virginia General Assembly, established by King William Parish, also known as the Huguenot Parish, the Huguenots established a church at this site which is now known as the Manakin Episcopal Church." That is out there quite close to us.

We are thankful as we look at the Huguenots how they were faithful under the persecution. There are also a couple of warnings we can receive from them. They thought they were going to protect themselves by taking up arms, and it ended up being very destructive to them. They were just wiped out. It also affected the testimony because as they were sharing the gospel people would say, "The Catholics kill us, and you Huguenots kill too. What is the difference?" There was not a clear distinction, and it muddled the whole testimony. They also tried to make peace through a compromise of the wedding and the marriage. So often things will compromise and come in.

Lately, the book of Ezra was mentioned in the prayer meeting. When the remnant first returned from Babylon to Jerusalem to build the house of God, there were ones who were already settled there. They had been settled there by the Assyrians and they said, "Come and let us build with you." And they said, "No. We will have no part in you." There are ones who will

want to infiltrate Christianity, assemblies in various places and work together. We see a lot of ecumenical movements, but we do not have any part in it. In this relative world today, everybody tries to blend things together. There is an absoluteness. You are either in Christ or you are not in Christ. And we do not have anything to do with that which is not in Christ other than to share the gospel with them, love them and win them over to Him. As far as working with them in this type of work it cannot be done. So we are thankful for the faithfulness of the Huguenots and we learn from each other's mistakes also.

Reformation in England

Now as we come over to England, England is a little bit behind Europe at this time as far as the Reformation. King John had already yielded to Pope Innocent II and they became a Roman Catholic Church. 1534 King Henry VIII separated from the Catholic Church, and we talked about that the last time. He did not do it for religious reasons; he did it for political purposes, and we are thankful how the Bible was finally published in English by Cloverdale. Eventually, King Henry VIII outlawed the Bible and persecution began. He arrested the Archbishop, Thomas Crammer, and one of the bishops, Hugh Latimer. They were put in prison, and during that time there were about 72,000 martyred. It was a tragic time.

In 1547 he died and King Edward VI abolished all antireligion laws. Does anyone know the nickname of King Edward VI? Pious One. He was the Pious One. He was also called the British Josiah because he was just a child when he took over, and Crammer was really his godfather and the great influencer. He was just a child when he took over, and he abolished all the antireligion laws. Because of that numerous independent assemblies were established outside the Church of England; it was a wonderful move. If you wanted to really start gathering together around the simplicity of Christ, you could do that; it was a wonderful move! But these are the ones who will begin suffering pretty soon. But all these independent assemblies were able to begin in England because of the grace of God through British Josiah King Edward VI.

Sadly, he died and Queen Mary who was a staunch Catholic, also known as Bloody Mary, took over. She is called Bloody Mary for the number of people she killed and slaughtered. Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake together, and as they were being burned Latimer encouraged Ridley and said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out." They would light that candle with their lives, and that candle will never be put out. Praise God for that!

Later on under Mary's reign Crammer finally gave in to her. She oppressed so much he finally said, "Okay, I surrender; I will go along with what you want." But soon after he did that he came to his senses and recanted. He said, "I cannot do this; I am a believer in Christ." Of course he was martyred. Fortunately, Mary died.

Queen Elizabeth comes in and supports again for political gain, and she supported the Protestants. She established this "Act of Uniformity" which required the use of the Book of Common Prayer and for all worship to be a pattern of the State Church. They said that this was the way it had to be. Because of all the independent assemblies that had been created, there was a controversy created between the Church of England and the independent assemblies who

cared more for puritan values and everything like that. But praise God, and this is what we will touch on next time; we will see the rise of Puritanism.

But we are thankful that during that brief time in which Edward VI reigned those assemblies were able to be established, and they stood up during the persecution. If you look at the Church of England versus the Roman Catholic Church up to this time we do not find a lot of spiritual value. Nevertheless, there were faithful ones like Crammer, Latimer, and Ridley who planted the seeds for the independent assemblies to be formed and to carry on the testimony of Jesus. And we are thankful how Luther and Zwingli were used in Europe, and Wycliffe and Crammer and these ones lit the candle in England and were able to carry on the testimony there. So we see how God in His great grace has always had ones who stood for the testimony of Jesus even from very influential ones like an Archbishop Crammer. He had such a position in the church that it would have been very easy for him just to hold on to his position and he would have been fine. But he said, "No, I cannot do this." These influential people in many ways were secure in the world and had everything, but they said, "No, I am not going to live that way. I want to end up dying for Christ." And how encouraging it was—and is.

So as we look at these faithful ones throughout the Anabaptists and Huguenots and these in England, we are thankful for the faithful ones. We are thankful for the faithfulness of the Lord. We can see how ones continued on. The reformers came so far, and these others went a little further, recovering more and more of the reality of Christ. But as we are beginning to get a picture evolving, we have three segments within overall Christendom. There is the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the ones who are outside the other two. Their only desire is to live for the testimony of Jesus. But sadly what we will see among those standing for the testimony of Jesus is that after a generation or two they begin to lose their first love. They begin to lose that life with the Lord, they begin to lose the Spirit of the living God within them. They think they have it. They think they are it; this is it. They turn it into a system. They end up being no different from anything else. But we will see God in His great faithfulness raise up others.

Brothers and sisters, as we have said before, each one of us is invaluable to the Lord, but we are not indispensable. He died for each one of us, but we are not indispensable. If we will not cooperate He will raise someone else up to carry on. That is what we see here. The Reformers were invaluable, but they only went so far. Others got raised up; they went a little bit further. After these ones others were raised up and carried it forward. So there are warnings, there are exhortations, there is encouragement in all of this for us to stay in that fresh, intimate relationship with the Lord.

We always have to ask the question: Where are we? As we look at these pictures, where are we? Where are we in God's economy? Do we have that life? Do we have that spark that He desires? Are we being that testimony of Jesus that He is calling us to be? We know that we are not shining as bright as we could, but we are desiring to be that testimony in a fuller and greater way and where we are not we are thankful we have the Spirit of the living God to convict us, to strengthen us that we may press on and allow Him to speak to us in a fresh way. So as we look back at this history, we see the great faithfulness of the Lord. We see the faithfulness of man, we

see the unfaithfulness of man, but we see God's great love for His testimony, and that is what we want to be a part of.

Let's pray:

Lord, we are thankful, as we always say, for Your great faithfulness and the love and mercy You show to us. And Lord, as we give ourselves to You in a continual way, we know that You are the One that sees clearly. We see in part; You see clearly. And we are desiring to press on. And as we give ourselves to You we are thankful for the life within that allows us by Your grace to press on. But we also know that if there is anyway we are hindering You, anyway we are trying to do things out of ourselves, Lord as we give ourselves to You in Your great love, You will discipline us. In Your great love You point things out. But it is not to crush us; it is to set us free. Those things that hinder us are really the bondage that we find ourselves in, and we want to be those sons of God who are enjoying the glorious liberty that we have in Christ and to be the people of God You are calling us to be. In Thy name we pray. Amen.