



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"

"Freedom." Text(s): *Romans 1.16-17; Romans 3.21-26; Ephesians 2.18-20; Various Texts.*

□ **Day #1—Monday, October 26th. Read: Ephesians 2.18-20. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

This week, we come to the end of our sermon series, "*Surrender. Serving the Savior*" We have studied how surrendering to the love, grace, and promises of God transforms every aspect of our lives! Saint Paul, writing to the church in Colossae, reminds the followers of Jesus...

*"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God... ¹⁰... put on the new self, which is being **renewed** in knowledge after the image of its creator.... ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Colossians 3.1-3, 10, 14)*

In *Colossians 3.10* above, the word "*renewed*" is taken from the Greek, ἀνακαινῶ (anakainōō), meaning, "To make new" or "To produce something new." Likewise, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines *renewal* as, "A situation in which something begins again after a pause or an interruption...a situation in which something is replaced, improved, or made more successful."¹ These definitions clearly describes how the power of God renews our broken lives (and world) so that we can live lives of freedom and hope!

The ultimate goal of our salvation in Christ is reconciliation with, and access to, our Heavenly Father. As Paul has argued, it is through Jesus, and only through Jesus, that those "near and far" are reconciled and granted access by the Holy Spirit. As P.T. O'Brien explains, "Christ's peacemaking work has provided access to the Father for both Jews and Gentiles through the one Spirit."² The Holy Spirit applies to the believer the work of Christ, both reconciling us *to God* and making possible a relationship *with God*. As John Stott brilliantly describes...

Although 'reconciliation' is an event; 'access' is the continuing relationship to which it leads...Through him we have obtained access...*Prosaḡōgē* (*access*) conjures up the scene in an oriental court, when subjects are granted an audience with the king or emperor, and are presented to him. The flavor of the word remains, but the emphasis changes because our access is not to a king but to a Father, before whom we have 'boldness and confidence of access' (3:12)...For our access is *to the Father, through him* (the Son who made peace and preached it), and *in or by one Spirit*, the Spirit who regenerates, seals and indwells his people...For it is *we both*, Jews and Gentiles, who as members of God's new society now approach our Father together. Thus the highest and fullest achievement of the peacemaking Christ is this Trinitarian access of the people of God, as through him and by one Spirit we come boldly to our Father.³

Consider/Reflect: "Access to the Father is no longer through the temple priesthood or based on being a Jew. Gentiles and Jews alike now gain direct access to God through the work of Christ and by the indwelling Spirit, the very presence of God with his people."⁴

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, October 27th. Read: Romans 3.21-22.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

Sunday was Reformation Sunday. For the next few days, we will focus on how God literally *renewed* the church, and the world, through the Protestant Reformation!

In the little town of Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, an Augustinian Monk, nailed a document to the village church door, challenging the church leadership to debate *ninety-five* theological principles. No one may have noticed then, but within the week, copies of his theses would be discussed throughout the surrounding regions; and within a decade, Europe itself would be shaken by his simple act. Later generations would mark Luther's nailing of the "*Ninety-Five Theses*" on

1 www.oxforddictionary.com

2 P.T. O'Brien. *The Letter to the Ephesians* (W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999).

3 J.R.W. Stott. *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (InterVarsity Press, 1979).

4 Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.

the church door as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. However, was it Luther's intention to shake up the world and the church? What did Luther think he was doing at the time? To answer these questions, we need to understand a little about Luther's own spiritual journey.

As a young man in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Luther was studying law at the university. One day he was caught in a storm and was almost killed by lightning. He cried out to St. Anne and promised God, if he survived, he would become a monk. In 1505, Luther entered the Augustinian monastery, and in 1507 became a priest. His monastic leaders sent him to Rome in 1510, but Luther was disenchanted with the ritualism and dead faith he found in the papal city, which caused Luther great despair. Personally, he felt very alienated from God and undeserving of God's love. Luther's struggles created "*anfechtung*" in Luther's soul; a German word describing an inner anxiety and feelings of hopelessness.

In 1515, Luther began teaching Paul's epistle to the Romans. Slowly, Paul's words in Romans began to break through the gloom of Luther's soul. Later, Luther wrote...

"My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement "the just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning...This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven."

The more Luther's eyes were opened by his study of Romans, the more he saw the corruption of the church in his day. The glorious truth of justification by faith alone had become buried under a mound of greed, corruption, and false teaching. Most offensive to Luther was the practice and selling of indulgences—certificates provided by the church which would shorten one's (or a loved one's) stay in Purgatory. The Pope encouraged the sale of indulgences, planning to use the money to help pay for the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. However, Luther could not find any Biblical authority for indulgences. Consequently, his hope was that he could debate this theological point (and others) with his superiors.⁵ Luther's hope was fulfilled! Luther was called to appear at an Imperial Diet (meeting) in Worms, Germany in 1521.

Consider/Reflect: Part of Luther's anxiety came from his fear that God was angry with him. Do you feel God is mad at you? Today, believe again the Gospel message: God is not mad AT you; He is mad FOR you!

□ Day #3—Wednesday, October 28th. Read: Romans 1.16-17.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

Johann Tetzel was one of the leading indulgence sellers in Luther's vicinity. He used a little "advertising jingle" to encourage people to buy his indulgences: "*As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.*" Again, as Luther realized the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice alone for our sins, he found such practices revolting. The more he studied the Scriptures, the more he saw the need of showing the church just how far it had strayed from the truth.

As was mentioned yesterday, it was on October 31, 1517, that Luther posted his "*Ninety-Five Theses*" on the church door in Wittenberg. In his day, this was the means of inviting scholars to debate important issues. No one took up Luther's challenge to debate at that time, but once news of his theses became known, many began to discuss the issues Luther raised—particularly the truth that salvation was by faith in Christ's work *alone*.

Ultimately, in 1520, the Pope issued a decree condemning Luther's views. Luther publicly burned the papal decree. A very bold act of defiance! In April of 1521, Luther was called to Worms, Germany, to appear before church and political leaders (The Diet of Worms). Luther was commanded to recant all of his teachings and writings. However, Luther would not back down in his insistence that "unless I am convinced by scripture...I cannot and I will not recant!"⁶

Prayer/Meditation/Reflection: "In the sixteenth century, the great reformer Martin Luther wrote the first treatise on distinguishing Law and Gospel. However, Luther's work was hardly new, since Scripture and its interpreters had always made this distinction...Law and Gospel...apply [God's] ways in your life as you read the Scripture...The Gospel proclaims repentance and the promise of grace and eternal life. The promise should be diligently distinguished from the Law. And although the Law has certain promises of its own, nevertheless, these differ from the unique promise of the Gospel. Moreover, the promises of the Law require the condition of perfect obedience as is said in the first commandment: 'I will do good to those who love me' [cf. Deut. 5:10]. But the evangelical [Gospel] promise—about remission of sins, justification, and the gift of eternal life—is gratuitous, offered on account of Christ, without a condition of our merits or our worthiness."⁷

⁵ Adapted from an earlier Christian History Institute story. For further study, see: Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*; Will Durant, *The Reformation*; Julius Köstlin, *Life of Luther*; Amos Wells, *Treasure of Hymns*; *Brief Biographies of 120 Leading Hymn-Writers and Their Best Hymns*; Various encyclopedia articles.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 29th. Read: Scripture Texts Below.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Nine years ago, in October 2017, we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation—this worldwide, church-wide movement that began with Luther’s personal understanding and deep experience of God’s grace, mercy, love and peace, *received through faith in Christ!* These truths transformed Luther’s life and would transform the lives of millions of others who will ultimately surrender to Jesus!

The very same social and ecclesial realities that Luther faced, the church faces today! As the church at the time of the Reformation was struggling with false teachings, sin, and idolatry, so does the church today! The church must always remember the “*solas*” upon which the Reformation was based, and which the church today must continue to teach and affirm: 1). God’s *Grace alone*. 2). *Scripture alone*. 3). *Faith alone*. 4). *Christ alone*. 5). God’s *Gory alone!*

Grace Alone: Martin Luther tried to earn God’s mercy by extreme measures and found that it would not work. If we attempt to stand in our own strength, we are on shaky ground, but when we stand in God’s grace, our lives are on solid footing. When we stand in God’s grace we know we are forgiven, we are accepted, and we are loved.

What do you need assurance of? In what areas of your life do you need to let go of control and stand in God’s grace?

Christ Alone: *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14.6.*

Meditate on John 14.6 above. Can you recall a time when you put your hope in something that ultimately failed you? Where was God in this situation?

Christ is not merely a way, but rather the only way to God... [John Hus]: “Let the humble pilgrim look at Christ ... Behold he who wants to go, has the way, for Christ is the way, and whither he wants to go, for Christ is the truth, and where he wants to abide, for Christ is the life”...The true God cannot be known apart from Jesus Christ. Because of Christ’s work, we can know the Father and enter His eternal presence.⁸

What do you need to let go of or change, in order for you to place your hope alone in the Lord?

Faith Alone: *We walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB)*

Consider/Reflect: [In 2 Corinthians 5.1-10] “...Paul simply instructs the believer to please God. We, even as Christians, often live to please others and to please ourselves, neglecting the one thing that makes life worth living—pleasing Christ. Paul calls us to get our priorities straight. To please Christ is to trust in His word of grace for us. His grace, His forgiveness, His gift of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit assures us that nothing in this world can separate us from God, and that Judgment Day will be a day of celebration for those who put their trust in Him. [Pray]: Dear Lord, impress upon my heart the greatness of Your grace to me, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that I can walk confidently by faith until I see You gloriously face-to-face. Amen.”⁹

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 30th. Read: Scripture Texts Below.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Yesterday, we examined three of the “*solas*” of the Reformation and Biblical faith. Today, we look at two more that are the means and the consequences of being saved by God’s *grace alone*, through *Christ alone*, received through *faith alone*...These truths are revealed through...

Scripture Alone: *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)*

Before the Reformation, the church strayed from the inerrant Word of God, elevating other things to the level of Scripture. In our lives today, what do we allow to replace Scripture? What should our response be? Finally, the consequence and response of the believer to being saved by *God’s grace*, through *Christ’s work for us*, as *revealed in God’s Word*, appropriated in our lives *through our faith*, results in...

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

God's Glory Alone: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10.31.

To live for the glory of God is to acknowledge His presence, His dwelling in you as His temple, and consequently, to desire that God work in and through us in all we do, for *His glory alone!* The more you glorify God, the more transformed (*renewed*) you will become.

Why do we tend to doubt that God can transform *any aspect* of our lives?

Consider/Reflect: “In our age, there are many gods. Some are worshiped as such (e.g., Islam, Hinduism); others subtly become gods (e.g., money, pride). Luther: ‘A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress’ (*Large Catechism I 2*). Our society has many such gods, be they wealth, status, reputation, even family. But the one true God does not tolerate shared allegiance. If we participated in the worship of false gods or in churches that do not faithfully confess the Gospel in all its purity, this would indicate that we assent to what that worshiping community believes. For this reason, we avoid such false worship. At the Lord’s Table, He offers His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and through them creates a faithful community, one committed to Him and to one another. He comes to His people in His Word and in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which forgives sins and creates a Church faithful to Him.”¹⁰

□ **Day #6-Saturday, October 31st. Read: Romans 3.23-26. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Again, it was on October 31st, 1517 that Luther’s Call rang out through Germany and consequently, to the world. Luther called for repentance (turning around/changing the mind) from sin and error, and back to the foundation of the Gospel...:

“When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said “Repent”, He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance...” (Theses Number 1, “The Ninety-Five Theses”). Other words of the Reformation...

“Righteousness.” δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiousune*): “The condition acceptable to God,” “The doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain a state approved of God.”

“Justified.” δικαιώω (*dikaioo*): “To render righteous.” “To declare one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be.”

“Faith.” πίστις (*pistis*): “...in the New Testament [a state of] conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things”

“Grace.” χάρις (*charis*): “Good will, loving-kindness, favor.”

As was mentioned on Wednesday, when told to recant his writings and teachings at the Diet of Worms in Germany, Luther’s reply was both courageous and the proper Christian attitude...:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me. Amen.”

Consider/Reflect: Where are you challenged to stand up for your faith?

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
New Sermon Series Begins: “Hope is Here!” (The Mission of the Church)
Scripture Texts:
Exodus 20.1-11
Hebrews 10.19-25
John 4.1-11, 13-14, 19-24