

Scripture Text

Romans 1:16-17, Ephesians 2:8-9

Context

On the 31st of October 1517, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of a Wittenberg church. His theses (or, propositions) were a list of items put forward for discussion regarding practices in the Roman Catholic church that he was concerned did not reflect Scripture. God used these 95 theses to spark a reformation in the church and return to a biblical understanding of salvation, which continues to have profound effects around the world.

Learning church history is important because history is the story of God's redemption in the world. Furthermore, it helps familiarise ourselves with our own faith's history, helps us avoid mistakes of the past, and enables us to be passively mentored by those who have gone before us.

Big Idea

The protestant reformation was essentially the recovery of the glorious and liberating truths of the gospel as God's people returned to the authority of Scripture.

Review the 5 Solas of the Reformation by reading the definitions and scriptures, and working through the meaning and application question for each Sola

1. **Scripture Alone:** The Bible alone is the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - Meaning: Why is all scripture authoritative according to 2 Timothy 3:16? What is it profitable for?
 - Application: What in your life has more functional authority than Scripture? Feelings? The views of others? Academia? Cultural icons? Science? Why is this wrong? (See Isaiah 40:8)

2. **In Christ Alone:** Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners and his atoning sacrifice is sufficient to save them (John 14:6)
 - Meaning: Jesus does not say that he shows the way but that he is the Way. What is the difference? How does Acts 4:12 underscore this point?
 - Application: What does this truth mean for the urgency of evangelism and missions? What must the sharing of the gospel contain if it is to lead to salvation?
3. **By Grace Alone:** Our salvation is not earned in any part; it is the free gift of God from start to finish (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - Meaning: If salvation is by grace alone, how much credit can we take for being Christians? (See Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - Application: If we truly believe salvation is by grace alone we will be humble towards God and others, and merciful towards all men. How does your personal humility show the depth of your belief that salvation is by grace alone?
4. **Through Faith Alone:** We are forgiven our sins and counted righteous in God's sight solely by trusting in Christ (Romans 4:1-8)
 - Meaning: What kind of faith is Romans 4:1-8 describing? What is the difference between mentally agreeing with something (mental ascent) and truly trusting in something?
 - Application: If salvation is premised on the certainty of Christ's work and not our obedience, then how much assurance of salvation can we have?
5. **To the Glory of God Alone:** The ultimate end of all God's works in creation and redemption is his own glory alone (Ephesians 1:3-14)
 - Meaning: What does Ephesians 1:6, 12 & 14 show us that salvation by grace is supposed to result in? Why would salvation by grace alone result in this?
 - Application: Does God's salvation enable you to make much of yourself, or to make much of God? How can you glorify God in your everyday actions?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.