

After Darkness, Light

The Reformation

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This morning we are going to be taking a break from our exposition of the book of James for a few weeks. We are going to start this morning in 2 Corinthians, if you will turn there, not so much an exposition of 2 Corinthians as a starting point for a topical message. This Sunday, before I go further, I want to mention that the Dacula home group that meets at Brad and Stacy Moore's house will not be meeting tonight so that is canceled for this evening. Dacula home group that meets at the Moore's house will not be meeting.

I wanted to take a break from the series because of Reformation Day and because of the fact that this is the last Sunday I'll be here before Reformation Day. We leave Wednesday, Patti and I and our daughter Maggie and Lauren, and we are going to Sicily to be at the Italian Theological Academy, and I will be preaching there next Sunday and then also on Reformation Day, we will be preaching and teaching in a conference about Luther and the Reformation. So I'm excited about that. I'd appreciate your prayers for us. Then we are going to be going to Spain, be preaching in Spain. It just hit me the other day that on the day of the Reformation, around the Reformation, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I will be preaching in Italy and Spain. Charles V was from Spain and, of course, the Pope in Rome, so we are kind of doing a reverse, some kind of... Anyway, I don't know, it's just interesting the Providence of God. So I would appreciate your prayers for us but, anyway, we will not be back in James until probably November 18 or 19, that Sunday.

So anyway, it is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation on October 31st and the title of the message this morning is "After Darkness, Light." After darkness, light. That is one of the phrases that resonates with the Reformation. Many call it the motto of the Reformation. It's inscribed on the Reformation monument in Geneva, actually in Latin, "Post tenebras lux," after darkness, light. That Reformation monument in Geneva was given to the city of Geneva on the 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth. That's when they started to give it to them. It took a lot to finish it. That would have been 1909 they sought to give them this gift and it was basically a thank you for the Gospel, a thank you by the Hungarian Reformed Church, they gave this monument to the city of Geneva. It's an awesome monument. If you're in Geneva and get a chance to go and see that, it would be well worth the time.

But after darkness, light. That's essentially the story of the Reformation. After darkness, light, and I want us to read from 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 which, in a way, resonates with that same image, after darkness, light, which is what happens in the soul of every person who comes to faith, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:1,

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that you might bless us as we consider the wonder of what you have done in history, as we consider the power of the Gospel and the power of your word. May you encourage our hearts by your Spirit that we might walk more faithfully with you and more joyfully in your truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

After darkness, light, the motto of the Reformation. I want to walk us through some of the history of the Reformation, so this really is a topical message on essentially what happened in 1517, what was happening at that period of time which, in a nutshell, was the greatest movement of God in history since the founding of the church. It's the greatest movement of God in history since the founding of the church, the Protestant Reformation.

So to understand it, what I'd like to do is consider it in our time under three points. The first point is the deepening darkness. The deepening darkness. To understand really the Reformation, it's helpful to understand the darkness that had fallen over Europe in the Middle Ages. So the first point: the deepening darkness.

The verse we just read, one of the verses said that Satan blinds the eyes of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the Gospel. He wants to eclipse and to cover the light and that was certainly what he was doing in the Middle Ages. The Roman Catholic Church was corrupted in its doctrines, most of which remain intact today. So they are still corrupted in their doctrines, all of the essential things that the Protestant Reformation was about, Rome continues to maintain those false beliefs, and essentially their theology of salvation was messed up. How can a sinner come to be right with a holy

God? How is a person saved? They believed and still believe that saving grace comes through the sacraments. They will acknowledge they believe in salvation by grace, salvation by faith, salvation on account of Christ, but it's not grace alone, it's grace plus merit. It's not faith alone, just believing in what God has done and that alone that brings salvation, it's faith plus works. And it's not Christ alone, it's Christ plus your own inherent righteousness and you get that righteousness infused to you as you go through the sacraments; as you participate in the very sacraments of the church, the sacrament of baptism, the initial sacrament that infuses righteousness, they believe, into the soul of the believer, and then is maintained through the sacrament of the Mass, the Lord's Supper, penance, all of the other aspects of Catholic doctrine.

So basically it becomes salvation by faith plus works and in the Middle Ages it was a particularly dark time when Martin Luther was born. He was born in 1483. Nine years before Columbus came to America, Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany. He was born to a father who was a miner. His parents were good Catholics and they raised Luther in the Catholic Church. He had a high view of the Catholic Church and of church in general. He grew up as a young man and began to study the law. In 1503, he graduated from the University of Erfurt and then in 1505 started studying for the law. He wanted to be a lawyer and on his way back home from Erfurt, he encountered a thunderstorm, the famous thunderstorm, 1505 is another important date in the life of Luther. He is walking along, and a thunderstorm comes up upon him and lightning strikes so close to him that he is knocked to the ground and in his terror, he cries out, he prays and listen to what he prays, "Help me, Saint Anne, and I'll become a monk!" You see, Luther was a good Catholic. He believed that to pray, the most effective prayers were prayed to the saints because they could understand. You can't pray to God, you can't pray to Jesus, he doesn't understand, you pray to Mary or you pray to the saints. So he prayed to a dead saint, Saint Anne, who happened to be the patron saint of miners. So he had been brought up to pray to Saint Anne, and so in that moment he cries out through Saint Anne, ultimately hoping to get to God. And then not only does he pray to the saints, but he offers something to God, "If you'll save me, I'll become a monk." You see that works mindset that dominates his life. Well, true to his diligence and his honor, he honored that vow and he immediately enrolled at the monastery at Erfurt. He shows up to become a monk. His dad becomes very angry because his dad had visions of him becoming, you know, a wealthy lawyer, and now he's going to become a monk.

So it's interesting, we were watching the video series we've been watching on Wednesday nights that R. C. Sproul is doing on the Reformation. It is a 10-week series. He shared something I had never heard before and I want to share it with you just kind of briefly. When Luther showed up to become a monk in Erfurt, you may remember if you've seen the movie or if you've read this, that the way that you had to present yourself to now become a monk is they would bring you in and there before the table, before the altar, you would lay on your face on the ground and hold out your arms in the shape of a cross, and you would stay there for a period of time, laying on the ground face down until finally the head of the monastery would come in and tell you to get up and now you begin to take your initial vows and you become a monk. He's laying on the ground and this is what I had never heard before, beneath him lies buried a Roman Catholic Bishop. Buried

in that particular church in Germany, in Erfurt, that monastery underneath that church floor is buried a bishop who 100 years before had condemned Jan Hus. Now, if you know about Jan Hus, he was a bohemian priest who like Luther in reading the Bible, saw that the practices of the Catholic Church were so far from the Scriptures and he tried to call for reform. And what happened to most people who called for reform, happened to him, he was tried as a heretic and sentenced to death, and he was sentenced to death by this Bishop. And after the sentence of death, Hus had uttered a prophecy, he said, "Today you cook a goose." The name Hus in the language that he spoke meant goose. So like Jan Goose was his name. "Today you cook a goose but in 100 years a swan will begin to sing and him you will not be able to silence." So right about a little less than 100 years, Martin Luther lies on the floor above the dead body of that bishop who condemned Hus and who heard him say, "Today you burn a goose, but a swan is going to sing that you won't be able to silence." Sproul in sharing this, he said, "I like to think that when that bishop heard Hus's challenge, he said, 'Over my dead body.'" The providence of God.

So Luther, though he is not a believer, he is becoming a monk in the monastery there at Erfurt. It happens to be an Augustinian monastery which is the one branch of the monks that really studies the Bible more than the others. So he begins to study the Bible and he gets a doctorate in theology and as he is working on being a monk, he is trying to find peace with God. He has a very sensitive conscience and the more that he reads the word, the more he sees how holy God is and how sinful he is, and he is laboring with all of the resources of Catholicism to deal with his guilty conscience. And as a monk, it's like the best Catholics are the monks. I mean, he is practicing self-denial and fasting; asceticism; praying many times a day; taking the Mass more than one time a day; and in confession every day spending significant time confessing his sins to the priest above him. In fact, it was said that Luther, most guys would spend 5, 10, 15 minutes in confession, Luther would spend an hour or two hours or three hours or even one time, six hours confessing his sins to the priest because he really believed that he needed to confess his sins to this man so that he could be clean. The priests finally got so irritated with him, they hated to see Luther come. One of the men there encouraged him to keep getting in the word because of that, but Luther longed for peace with God and all of the things that Catholicism offered could not give him that peace with God.

1510, after five years in the monastery, Luther was selected along with one of the other brother monks there to go on a trip to Rome representing the monastery in its business to Rome. He was going to get to take a pilgrimage to Rome and in medieval Catholicism and even today, pilgrimages have great value toward obtaining your salvation. You go to a holy place, you visit relics. These things can cut down your time in purgatory, the Catholic doctrine that after Christians die they go to a place of torment and suffering until their sins are purged, millions of years in purgatory, thousands of years in purgatory.

Well, so he goes to Rome and he's thinking that he's going to get to be in the holy city. He can't wait. God is going to do something great in his life. When he gets there he is greatly disappointed. The priests that are in Rome, it's not a holy city at all, it's really a moral cesspool. He sees the priests, you know, going in to prostitutes, female and male prostitutes. He sees priests who are reading the Mass or sharing a Mass so that people can

get, you know, certificates toward reducing their time in purgatory and they read it so fast that it's almost like they're trying to do that little thing at the end of the commercial. Right through it. Nothing in their hearts, it's just all a form and it's about collecting money.

He goes to the sacred stairs and he knows that if he goes up each of these stairs, they reportedly were brought back from Palestine, the sacred stairs in Rome that are still there were reportedly brought back from Palestine to Rome during the Crusades, disassembled in Palestine, brought back to Rome and these were apparently or believed to be the stairs Jesus walked up and down when he went to see Pilate. So Catholics teach that if you will say a prayer on each one of those steps, I think it's an "Our Father" on each one of those steps and you kiss each step all the way up, that you gain so many years off of your time in purgatory. So Luther was glad to be able to do that and he was there representing his grandparents because he knew that if he went to the top and the doctrine was that you would get a document that says you can basically deliver whoever is in purgatory from any of their past sins, it would be wiped away if you do this and you get to the top and you give the money that you're supposed to give and you do it all in faith, that you're going to basically get grandpa out of purgatory. That's what he did but as he gets to the top and he stands up at that last step, he is just seized with looking at the people around him, having begun to read the Bible, doubt comes across his heart and he says, "Who knows if this is true?"

So he goes back home from Rome to Erfurt more discouraged, more in despair, still wracked with guilt, conviction of sin. But shortly after that, he's chosen to become a professor at the University of Wittenberg. He's asked to be the professor of Bible there and he begins to teach the Scriptures. In 1513, he begins to teach Psalms. He is preparing lectures daily on the Psalms for the students there at the University of Wittenberg. In 1515, he begins to teach on Romans and this is the next important date. 1505, 1510, 1515. 1515 is when Luther begins to teach on Romans and he encounters what people call the tower experience when he was wrestling with God up in the tower above the church there, dealing with Romans 1:16 and 17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'" As Luther was wrestling over how it is that the Gospel and righteousness are related to one another, he could not understand. For him, he confesses later that for him the righteousness of God he had grown to hate because the righteousness of God meant the holiness of God, all that separated him from God, and this God who was so righteous, he was initially understanding this, the Gospel reveals his righteousness and just puts more condemnation on us as sinners. But as he wrestled with the Lord trying to understand what Paul is saying here, suddenly the truth became clear to him; that what this is saying is that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; that God gives his righteousness to those who believe. That it's a gift. It's not something you earn or you're infused with or you grow in. It's a gift that is given to you when you believe.

When this happened, Luther reports that so long he had striven trying to find peace with God and when he understood in Romans 1:17 that righteousness is from outside of you,

the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the perfect righteousness of Jesus who lived 33 years basically as a man and he fulfilled the law perfectly, always did what God wanted, has a perfect record, that his righteousness is imputed to the sinner. As Luther said, what we gain is an alien righteousness, a righteousness from outside of us is given to us, and we receive it through faith. This is what the Bible is teaching. When this became clear, he said, "I was born again, and the gates of Paradise opened and I walked in." This is a light has dawned. Light has come into his soul, his troubled, dark soul. Luther was a microcosm of the darkness of Europe and now he's delivered.

One of the things that led, the key thing that led to his deliverance was reading the Bible, and so he wants to get the word of God into the lives of the people. In fact, one of these I forgot to mention in the darkness, actually I've now moved to point 2. Deepening darkness, dawning of the light was the second point. Just put it down and it's somewhere in there. I've already transitioned to point 2. I apologize. This is the difficulty of not being in a text, going right back and forth.

Anyway, the dawning of the light. The recovery of the Gospel happened with Luther through what happened as he taught through Romans. But part of the darkness, now I'm going to go back and back-fill point 1 again. Can in confuse it any more? Okay, the reason it was so dark in Europe was because the Bible was not in the language of the people. When you went to church, if you were a good Catholic and you went to church, whether you were in England, you were in France, you were in Germany, you were in Italy, you went to church, 95% of the people in the church could not understand a word that was said during the entire service because every word of the service was done in Latin, a dead language. The only people who knew Latin were the priests and the university students, the lawyers. Just a very small percentage of the people knew what was even being said. In fact, it said that many of the priests who really didn't study their Latin too well just knew how to read it, they didn't know what it even meant. But can you imagine if you were here and I was speaking Portuguese and everything that happened, every song was sung in Portuguese, every prayer was prayed in Portuguese, how much benefit would that be to you? It would be no benefit at all.

This is what the Catholic Church thought, they believed that Latin was a sacred language and that the Bible should not be translated into the languages of the people. In fact, this was why they condemned Wycliffe even after he died, because he had, John Wycliffe in the 1300s had dared to translate the Bible from Latin into English. They dug up his bones and burned them because the Bible cannot be in the language of the common people because the common people can't handle it. This remained Roman Catholic dogma until just the last 50 or 60 years ago at Vatican II, they finally allowed the Bible to be read in the language of the people, the service to be done in the language of the people.

Now, it's so incredibly contrary to the Bible. Let me just say a word about that while I'm on that. To say the Bible cannot be handled by the common people is to go completely against God himself. How do we get the Bible? He gave us the Hebrew Old Testament in the language Hebrew, the New Testament he gave us in the language of Greek, and he gave it to us in the language of Koine Greek. Do you know what "Koine" means? It

means "common or vulgar." He gave his New Testament in the language of the common vulgar tongue of the people. When he wanted the Gospel to go forth, he had all those Jewish guys, those Hebrew speaking Jews, write in Greek because he wanted it to go out to all of the people, all of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, because everybody could speak Greek and everybody could speak the common language. God wants his message heard and understood by people.

Another example of that, remember a few years back we preached through Daniel. Daniel 2 to Daniel 7, six chapters of the book of Daniel are written in Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians. When Daniel was there ministering in Babylon, God wanted his word to go even to those heathens in Babylon in their tongue. Now, how can you take that and possibly say the Bible ought not be in the language of the people? It's just evidence of the corruptness and the unbiblical heresies that are there in Catholicism.

So the dawning of the light. So Luther experiences the dawning of the light personally with the Gospel and he begins to in his new life continuing to read the word of God, he's looking at his life and he begins to reform himself and then he encounters more and more problems in the Catholic Church. 1517 is the next key date. That's when the Pope sends a man, a Dominican monk named John Tetzel to Germany. Tetzel was in charge of raising money in Germany through the sale of indulgences for the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He was, you would say, a very talented speaker. He was not a man of God at all. He was anything but, but he was a showman. He knew how to play on the hearts of people. A fiery preacher who inflamed the emotions of his hearers.

Tetzel using the false doctrine of purgatory and the unbiblical practice of indulgences, would say things like this, he would get a crowd around him by having a big procession into town, the crowd gathers, and he begins to preach and he would say, "Listen," after being really fiery and demonstrative, he would become quiet and say, "Listen. If you listen carefully you can hear the screams of your loved ones who are even now burning in purgatory. Listen. Hear them cry out, 'Why? Why do you not care about me?'" This kind of thing and he played on their emotions and he was raising money and he was doing a great job for the Pope.

Luther hears about it because some of his parishioners, he's a pastor as well. He's teaching at the university but he's preaching in the Castle Church in Wittenberg. He's concerned. His poor parishioners are spending their money for a piece of paper that is not worth the paper it's written on. It's waste. So he's disturbed about this, angry, he wants to do something about it, so what he does is he formulates the 95 theses, a statement on the disputation of the nature and efficacy of indulgences. He writes this and he writes it in Latin, actually, because he's doing it for the university students. He's not trying to keep it from the people, this is how the language in the university, if I'm going to get the guys to have a debate, I'm going to write it up there and he writes it in Latin, the 95 theses. He nails it to the door of the church. That was simply putting it on the bulletin board. That's where you would put any announcement like that. He's basically saying, "Look, here's what I think about indulgences. Let's have a discussion among ourselves. I'm inviting all the professors, all the students. We need to discuss this." Luther is wanting to start some

kind of, you know, movement but he doesn't have any idea what he's really about to start because he really believed that if the Pope knew what was going on, the Pope would stop it. You see, Luther was still a good Catholic, loyal to the church.

But what happened was some of those students took those 95 theses, read them, and then translated them into German and because the printing press had been invented about 60 years before that, they printed it and spread it out. They say within two weeks every town and village in Germany had a copy of the 95 theses in German. Luther, I can imagine he was, like, "Whoa, what is going on?" But he believed in the doctrines he was espousing, he just wasn't necessarily planning to start a Reformation the way it happened. But everything in God's Providence and wisdom were set so that the Reformation began.

So what happens is, you know, he really believed the Pope once he got word, he just wanted an opportunity to reason with those in authority to let them know what's happening, show them from the Scriptures. "Surely, we don't really want this stuff happening, right?" So in 1518, the Pope sends a Cardinal, Cardinal Cajetan to meet with Luther in Augsburg, Germany. Luther is excited about the opportunity to discuss with someone very high up in the Catholic Church and he's optimistic that they'll have a good productive conversation, but when he gets there, it's anything but productive. Cajetan doesn't want to hear anything from him, he just wants him to recant what he's doing.

So they speak to one another three different times over a couple of days. Luther keeps trying to argue the Scriptures and Cajetan keeps trying to shut him down. It ends unsuccessfully from the Catholic viewpoint. Cajetan returns to Rome. Luther returns to Wittenberg. 1519, they dispense another guy, John Eck, a German expert in theology and he disputes with Luther at Leipzig and, again, Luther holds his own and explains from the Scriptures and Eck is not convinced. So in 1520, the Pope issues a decree, the Papal Bull, that if Luther does not recant of what he's written and what he's teaching, he will be excommunicated. Those 60 days pass and Luther is excommunicated and he is sentenced to death by the Pope. Anyone who sees him can legally kill him.

Now in God's Providence, Luther is in Germany and he is in the area of Saxony which you've heard the name Frederick the Wise. Frederick the Wise was one of the electors in the Holy Roman Empire who his area, his territory that he ruled over was Saxony, and he is the guy who started the University of Wittenberg and wanted Luther to be one of his professors. He had heard about this brilliant young mind at Erfurt and he wants him to come and be his professor and he's starting a university and he wants to be a world, not a worldwide known university, but like the best university in Germany. So he gets three really outstanding faculty. So then when Luther starts having problems, Frederick is thinking in terms of, "I don't want you messing with my professor." You know, just in a natural way, God has set this up.

Well, it turns out when the Pope had a special relationship with Frederick, Frederick was a very influential man, and so the Pope says, "I want Luther sent down here to Rome to be tried on heresy charges," that's where Frederick says, "No, why don't you send somebody up to Augsburg. I'm not sending my professor to Rome. I know what happens

to people that get sent to Rome, they get burned to death. You send somebody up to Augsburg." "We need him sent to Rome." "No, you send somebody to Leipzig." And then even when Charles V wants to hold the Diet of Worms which is now the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, wants to try Luther in civil court, Frederick is able to convince him to come to Worms, Germany, and part of the reason was in God's wisdom, he's called an elector because each of the men who ruled over pieces of the Holy Roman Empire got to vote on the Emperor and Frederick cast the deciding vote for Charles V, his nephew. So Charles V was indebted to Frederick so when Frederick said, "No, you come to Worms and I want a guarantee of safe conduct," Charles V had to say yes. These things did not happen when you were bucking the Catholic Church until this moment. God had set everything in place to keep this man alive.

So he goes to Worms, Germany, the Diet of Worms. I've been hearing that, like, gummy worms are good but anyway, the Diet of Worms. He goes there in April 1521. Again, Luther still is hopeful that he's going to finally be able to speak and defend his doctrine, but as it turns out, there are two questions that he's asked by the papal legate, representative. Basically, "Luther, are these your books?" There is a pile of his books on the table. "Are these your books? And will you recant?" Luther wants to debate. "No, you're not speaking. We don't want to hear anything from you. The question is: are these your books?" "Yes, they're my books." "Will you recant?" And Luther now feeling the weight of all that's happening, not knowing he was coming to just not have an opportunity to even debate, he experiences a moment of trepidation and he says, "Can I have 24 hours to consider?" So they give him 24 hours and the next day they come back and again the question, "Are these your books? Will you recant?" And that's when he, having spent the night in prayer, responds to the papal representative, "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and plain reason, I will not recant anything I have written. I consider myself bound by the testimony of Holy Scripture. My conscience is captive to the word of God thus I cannot and will not recant because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

I mean, Luther truly believed when he made that statement he was signing his own death warrant and in truth, though he was granted safe conduct, the Emperor did judge him worthy of death. But Luther is given safe conduct back. He's heading back to Wittenberg and he's kidnapped. We don't know...at first he was kidnapped by...nobody knows. They thought he was probably kidnapped by somebody from the Emperor and killed but, in fact, again, Frederick the Wise, he strikes again. He apparently made it look like Luther was kidnapped and then whisked him away to the Wartburg Castle to protect Luther, again, his prize professor. And there in 1521 and 1522, Luther translates the Bible from Greek, the New Testament from Greek into German.

His writings are spreading. All the books that he's written, in fact he was such a prolific writer, some of you got to hear Steve Lawson was sharing that Luther was such a prolific writer that all of his works together would fill more than 100 volumes. I mean, he was just cranking out things constantly as he read the word and he was trying to correct the errors that were out there.

Well, a young man by the name of William Tyndale, who is a priest, studying to be a priest in England, picks up some of Luther's literature and he reads it and God brings him to saving knowledge of Christ and Tyndale is the one who then translates the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into English. A young university student in Paris begins to read some of Luther's writings. His name is John Calvin. These men pick up the torch that Luther has lit and they carry it alongside him and carry it even beyond Luther's death.

So he had written prolifically. He continued preaching and teaching in Wittenberg, ministering until his death in 1546, less than 30 years after he nailed those 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. He was asked as he was getting older and looked at how the Lord had worked, you know, the Gospel now by 1545, 1546, it's strongly established in England, it's strongly established, Calvin is preaching in Geneva. Zurich, Zwingli is reformed. I mean, the Gospel is spreading across Europe. The light has dawned and is powerfully impacting Europe.

Luther was asked, "When you look at the things that have happened, could you have ever imagined that God would do something like this through you in your life?" And he said basically deflecting any credit to himself, he says this, "I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing. The Word did it all."

That is the story of the Reformation. How does one man stand against the world? How does one man stand up against the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire? He was able to stand because the word of God, his soul was captive to the word of God. He knew the word of God is true. Popes contradict themselves, Councils have contradicted themselves but the word of God never contradicts itself. And because his soul was captive to the word of God, he had the courage to continue to stand and so that the light began to spread so that truly so many were able to say personally, after darkness, light. And then nations, like I said, the Hungarian Reformed Church almost 400 years after Luther nailed those theses, sending that thank you to Calvin because Calvin had preached in Geneva and many people flocked to Geneva who were being persecuted by the Catholics, put to death. They would escape to a place like Geneva where it was Protestant and so people from all over Europe came and sat at Calvin's feet as he taught the word of God. And what did they do? They went back into those places preaching the Gospel with more clarity and with more power and the Gospel continued to spread and that's what those Hungarian Reformed believers were saying, "Thank you. Thank you for the light."

Praise God that that's still the way that he works in delivering people from darkness. He sends forth his word and heals us. If you don't know Jesus Christ, you need to come to him today and understand that the word of God is that which reveals him to you; that you can be saved by placing your faith in Jesus and Jesus alone. It's not about working yourself into a place where God can accept you. It's looking no longer to yourself, it's looking completely to Christ. His perfect life of righteousness and his death in our place

on the cross. He took our sins himself and was punished for them and he gives us his righteousness so that we can be rewarded and given heaven. And if you'll place your faith in him, you will be saved today. Today is the day of salvation.

Then for those of us who know him, our lives as a Christian, the areas of darkness that still we struggle with, what's the answer? The answer is the light of God's word and the light of God's word brings Jesus. Jesus is the answer. So let's keep ministering the word to one another and keep celebrating that his word is mighty. It goes forth as he says in Isaiah 55, that as the rains fall upon the earth and do not return there without first watering the earth and producing seed for the sower and food for the eater, so is my word which goes forth from my mouth. It will not return to me empty but will accomplish the purpose for which I send it. The word of God is mighty. It's living and active. Praise his name.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the way that you have worked to deliver your word to us in a way that we can understand it, that you spoke in human words, in human language, and yet it's not the word of man merely. It is the word of man but it's more than that, it's also the word of God. Every word God-breathed. Thank you that you give it to us in our language that we can hear it today in our tongue and understand it. And we thank you, Lord, that this book reveals to us the true and living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we pray that you will keep us faithful to the truth; that we will take the baton that has been handed to us from our forefathers spiritually, from the Gospel all the way through the Reformation to today, and that we will be faithful to contend for the truth; that we will be faithful to love the God of truth and to love the one who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Lord, may you be glorified in the lives of holy people who hold forth the word of life to those who are perishing. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.