

INTRODUCTION

1. In church history, there is an event that occurred 501 years ago that changed the church forever.
2. That event was one of the most significant events of all time.
3. It occurred on **October 31, 1517.**
4. What event am I referring to? **the Protestant Reformation.**
5. **3 Men: Martin Luther in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, and John Calvin in France** protested various unbiblical practices of the Catholic Church and promoted a return to sound biblical doctrine."
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Protestant-Reformation.html>)
6. In Germany, Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenburg.
7. This was to express his growing concern with the corruption within the Church.
8. In essence, his Theses called for a full reform of the Catholic Church and challenged other scholars to debate with him on matters of church policy."
9. One of the major issues that concerned Luther was the matter of church officials selling "indulgences."
10. An indulgence removes time needed to be spent in purgatory.
11. The Second Vatican Council mentions purgatory as a place of punishment for our sins: "The truth has been divinely revealed that sins are followed by punishments. God's holiness and justice inflict them. Sins must be expiated. This may be done on this earth through the sorrows, miseries, and trials of this life and, above all, through death. Otherwise, the expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments." (<https://carm.org/catholic/indulgences>)
12. Luther felt that these church officials were teaching people that they could literally buy their way into the kingdom of God or buy God's favor."
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/95-theses.html>)

13. So the church needed to reform.
14. But instead of the church reforming or debating Luther on these issues, she rebelled.
15. No one spoke against the Pope and lived to tell about it.
16. The Pope said of Luther, "There is a wild boar in God's vineyard."
17. First the Pope sent officials to speak out against Luther but Luther prevailed against them with the skill and understanding of God's Word.
18. Next they summoned him to Worms to recant his writings.
19. On the way to Worms he preached in every city winning the hearts of the people.
20. As he stood before those who accused him of going against the Church's teachings calling for him to recant his writings he said, "*Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.*"
21. The church today also needs to reform.
22. It needs to stop watering down the Gospel and preach the full counsel of God.
23. Part of teaching the full counsel of God means a return to the 5 solas of the Reformation.
24. Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone), Sola Fide (by faith alone), Sola Gratia (by grace alone), Solus Christus (by Christ alone), and Soli Deo Gloria (For God's glory alone).
25. I love the Reformers.
26. And I agree with the Psalmist who said in Psalm 119:63 (NASB) I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.
27. I love what the Reformers stood for and that they were willing to die for their beliefs.
28. We need to know who they were and learn from their commitment to the Word of God.

29. Many churches today participate in Halloween by offering alternatives.
30. I choose not to participate but to focus our attention on what happened 501 years ago to the church and how we can continue what the reformers gave their lives for.
31. So today, I want to talk about why I love the reformers and why you should too.
32. To begin, I want to invite you to take God's Word and turn to Romans chapter 1.
33. Paul said in verses 16-17, "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."
34. This was the turning point for Martin Luther.
35. Martin Luther said, "At first I clearly saw that the free grace of God is absolutely necessary to attain to light and eternal life; and I anxiously and busily worked to understand the word of Paul in Rom. 1:17: The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. I questioned this passage for a long time and labored over it, for the expression 'righteousness of God' barred my way. This phrase was customarily explained to mean that the righteousness of God is a virtue by which He is Himself righteous and condemns sinners. In this way all the teachers of the church except Augustine had interpreted the passage. They had said: The righteousness of God is the wrath of God. But as often as I read this passage, I wished that God had never revealed the Gospel; for who could love a God who was angry, who judged and condemned people? This misunderstanding continued until, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I finally examined more carefully the word of Habakkuk 2:4: 'The just shall live by his faith' From this passage I concluded that life must be derived from faith.... Then the entire Holy Scripture became clear to me, and heaven itself was opened to me. Now we see this brilliant light very clearly, and we are privileged to enjoy it abundantly." (<https://www.letterofmarque.us/2011/10/martin-luther-on-romans-117-the-key-that-unlocked-the-reformation.html>)
36. Later Luther used a Latin phrase, "*simul iustus et peccator*," meaning "simultaneously justified and sinner."
37. Luther used this phrase to communicate the reality of justification by faith alongside the Christian's continual struggle against sin.
38. According to Luther, justification means that believers have received the alien righteousness of Christ through imputation, which destroys the power of sin that

leads to death but does not eradicate the presence and pollution of sin.

39. The sinner is justified not through an infusion of actual righteousness that eradicates sin but by being declared righteous because Christ's righteousness has been credited to his account. (Kapic, Kelly M., and Wesley Vander Lugt. *Pocket Dictionary of the Reformed Tradition* 2013 : 109–110. Print. The IVP Pocket Reference Series.)
40. Luther said, "For the nature of this righteousness is, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and to believe this only: that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen; that he sits in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption; briefly, that he is our high priest entreating for us, and reigning over us and in us by grace." (Ritzema, Elliot. *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Reformation*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013. Print. Pastorum Series.)
41. On his blog, Tim Challies shares why he is thankful to be a Protestant.
42. He writes, "I'm thankful to be Protestant, I'm thankful for the work of Martin Luther and the other reformers because they returned scripture to the center of our life and faith, because they did away with the system of indulgences, they found in the scripture there's no support for the system of indulgences, and because we can look at man like Luther and Calvin and trust them as teachers who led us back to the Bible, back to the truth that God reveals there. 500 years after Luther, 500 years after the Reformation, I'm very thankful to be Protestant."
(<https://www.challies.com/articles/why-im-thankful-to-be-protestant/>).
43. I am thankful too for these same things.
44. And my love for God and His Word shares this personal conviction.
45. For our remaining time together, I want to give you reasons why I love the reformers and why you should love them too.

LESSON

1. **They Loved Scripture**

1. One of the central tenets of the Reformation was *sola scriptura*—by Scripture alone—meaning Scripture is the final authority on all issues Not popes, cardinals, priests or the church.

2. Only those Church traditions that find their root in Scripture were embraced by the Reformers.
3. This was the battle cry that echoed throughout the Reformation of the 16th century.
4. The Reformers wanted to return the Church to the idea that Scripture, not tradition, was the true revelation of God.
(<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/articles/scripture-and-tradition-in-the-reformation>)
5. The motto of Reformation studies was *ad fontes*, which means "back to the sources."
6. The Reformers went back to the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek "but the thing that they were concerned with was to return to the Scriptures."
7. This brought about "the recovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone."
8. The Reformers were also interested in details.
9. You see it especially in Calvin's sermons and commentaries.
10. Even though he never referred to the Greek or the Hebrew in his sermons, "he always walked in the pulpit with just the Bible in the original language."
11. In their love of the original languages and their use of them in their sermon preparation, the Reformers preached each week to God's people."
(<https://www.5minutesinchurchhistory.com/the-reformers-and-the-bible>)
12. Another Reformer by the name of Marten Micronius wrote in 1554:

"No churchly gathering is ever held among us in which the church is not taught to some extent from God's Word, in order for it to be edified, admonished, and comforted.

And, for very good reasons, the Scriptures are not expounded in sermons on isolated pericopes (passages), as in the practice among the papists (a Roman Catholic) Instead, we take some book of the Bible, either from the Old or the New Testament, and we expound it from the beginning to the end. In all sermons we successfully read from this book, as much as can be edifyingly

and properly expounded and explained within one hour.

If necessary, the ministers of the Word are also admonished not to go too much beyond the scope of their text and their preaching. Rather, they should (as much as possible) take all their teaching, admonishment, exhortation, rebuke, and comfort from their present text.

(<https://www.5minutesinchurchhistory.com/martin-micronius/>)

13. The Reformers had the same passion of the Psalmist who wrote in:

1. Psalms 119:47 (NASB) I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love.
2. Or in Psalms 119:97 (NASB) O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

2. They Wanted the Bible in the Language of the People

Wycliffe believed that the Bible in a written form that the average person could read and understand was the greatest tool for the Christian. This resource was the key in getting the people of his day to live right.

1 John 4:15 (NASB) Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1. The church locked up the Scriptures in Latin but the people couldn't read Latin so they had to rely on the clergy to tell them what it said.
2. This led to abuse and unbiblical church traditions
3. One of Martin Luther's greatest achievements was the German Bible which brought the Bible to the people in their language.
4. While Luther was hidden for his own safety, he translated the New Testament in just 11 weeks, followed in later years by his translation of the Old Testament.
5. It was Luther's desire that his translation reflect a "spoken" language as opposed to a more formal "written" German.
6. He said: "We must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man. . .guided by their first language. . .and do our translating accordingly."
(<https://www.museumofthebible.org/book-minute/martin-luther-and-the->

german-bible)

7. When Martin Luther was printing his translation of the Bible in Germany, pieces of the printed Scripture fell to the floor.
8. A young girl picked one of them up and read the phrase of our text, “For God so loved the world that he gave”.
9. The rest of the sentence was missing.
10. That moment for her was a defining experience as the truth gripped her.
11. She had been told so often that God was a Judge and One to be dreaded.
12. She ran home with excitement in her heart, passing the note to tell her mother and talking endlessly of this wonderful discovery.
13. Her mother read it and perplexed asked, “But what did He give?”
14. The young girl was lost for a moment with a puzzled expression, not knowing the answer.
15. But suddenly a thought came to her and her face lit up again as she said, “I don’t know; but if He loved us well enough to give us anything, we need not be afraid of Him.”

3. **They Systematically Taught Theology**

1. The 5 solas are theology
2. Each of these *solas* can be seen both as a corrective to the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church at the start of the Reformation and as a positive biblical declaration.
 1. **Sola scriptura emphasizes the Bible alone as the source of authority for Christians.**
 1. By saying, “Scripture alone,” the Reformers rejected both the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Pope and confidence in sacred tradition.
 2. Only the Bible was “inspired by God” (2 Peter 1:20-21) and “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

3. Anything taught by the Pope or in tradition that contradicted the Bible was to be rejected.
 4. *Sola scriptura* also fueled the translation of the Bible into German, French, English, and other languages, and prompted Bible teaching in the common languages of the day, rather than in Latin.
2. **Sola fide emphasizes salvation as a free gift.**
 1. The Roman Catholic Church of the time emphasized the use of indulgences (donating money) to buy status with God.
 2. Good works, including baptism, were seen as required for salvation.
 3. *Sola fide* stated that salvation is a free gift to all who accept it by faith (John 3:16).
 4. Salvation is not based on human effort or good deeds (Ephesians 2:9).
 3. **Sola gratia emphasizes grace as the reason for our salvation.**
 1. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done rather than what we do.
 2. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 4. **Sola Christus emphasizes the role of Jesus in salvation.**
 1. The Roman Catholic tradition had placed church leaders such as priests in the role of intercessor between the laity and God.
 2. Reformers emphasized Jesus’ role as our “high priest” who intercedes on our behalf before the Father.
 3. **Hebrews 4:15 teaches, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**
 4. Jesus is the One who offers access to God, not a human spiritual leader.

5. **Soli Deo gloria emphasizes the glory of God as the goal of life.**

1. Rather than striving to please church leaders, keep a list of rules, or guard our own interests, our goal is to glorify the Lord.
2. The idea of *soli Deo gloria* is found in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/five-solas.html>)

4. **They Lived Their Convictions and It Cost Them Their Lives**

Psalms 116:15 (NASB) Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.

Psalm 68:20 (NASB) God is to us a God of deliverances; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.

1. The early reformers:

1. **John Wycliffe** (1320 – 31 December 1384)

1. In 1415, the Synod of Constance declared John Wycliffe a notorious heretic who died in his heresy and ordered his bones removed from consecrated ground. In 1425, Wycliffe was disinterred, his bones burned and thrown into the river. (Foxe, John. *Foxe’s Christian Martyrs: The Powerful Classic, Abridged and Updated*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2014. Print.)

2. **John Huss** (1372 – 6 July 1415)

1. On June 7, 1415, Huss was brought before a council and condemned as a heretic when he refused to recant his support of Wycliffe’s theology.
2. He was stripped of all his church offices, made to wear a paper hat with the words ARCH-HERETIC on it, and led past a fire consuming his books.
3. On July 6, 1415, the hangman stripped Huss of his clothes, tied his hands behind him, then chained his neck to the stake.
4. At that point, Huss told the hangman that he was glad to accept the chain for the Lord’s sake.

5. Straw and wood were piled around him to his chin, and the fire was lit.
6. As the flames rose around him, Huss was heard to say over and over, “Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, have mercy upon me,” until the flames choked him.
7. When all the wood was burned, the upper part of his body was still hanging in the chain, so they threw it down, made a new fire, and burned it after cutting his head into small pieces.
8. When he was totally burned, Huss’s ashes were carefully collected and thrown into the Rhône River. (Foxye, John. *Foxye’s Christian Martyrs: The Powerful Classic, Abridged and Updated*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2014. Print.)

2. The protestant reformers:

New churches emerged from the Reformation, forming four major divisions of Protestantism: Luther’s followers started the Lutheran Church, Calvin’s followers started the Reformed Church, John Knox’s followers started the Presbyterian Church in Scotland (using Calvinistic doctrine), and, later, Reformers in England started the Anglican Church.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Protestant-Reformation.html>)

1. **John Calvin** (10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564)

1. The burden of so much work put a growing strain on Calvin’s health. In 1558 he came down with quartan fever, or malaria, but laboured on to complete a hugely enlarged and, as he intended, definitive edition of his *Institutes* to leave to posterity.
2. Michael Mullett in his biography of Calvin quotes an admiring contemporary, Theodore Beza, who described him in 1563 as ‘exhausted by labour’ and ‘broken down by suffering’.
3. He had lung trouble, gout and excruciating pain in his kidneys and bladder.
4. Calvin was 54 when the end came the following year and the council recorded that he had ‘gone to God’.

5. He was buried with little ceremony.
6. The grave was left unmarked, though in the 19th century a stone was placed on the one traditionally identified as the last resting place of the man Beza called ‘the greatest light there was in this world for the direction of the church of God.’
(<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/john-calvin-dies-geneva>)

2. **John Knox** (10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564)

1. On November 24, 1572, Scottish clergyman and reformer John Knox died in Edinburgh.
2. Before his death he said to those gathered at his bedside: “The time is approaching, for which I have long thirsted, wherein I shall be relieved and be free from all cares, and be with my Savior forever; and now, God is my witness, whom I have served with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that I have taught nothing but the true and solid doctrines of the gospel, and that end which I purposed in all my doctrine, was to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the consciences of those that were humbled under the sense of their sins, and to denounce the threatening of God’s Word against such as were rebellious.
3. I am not ignorant, that, in my heart, I never hated the persons of those against whom I thundered God’s judgments; I did only hate their sins, and labored, according to my power, to gain them to Christ; that I did forbear none of whatsoever condition, I did it out of fear to my God, who placed me in this function of the ministry, and I know will bring me to an account.”
4. After some words to the new pastor, he commended the whole Session to the grace of God."
(<https://thisday.pcahistory.org/2014/11/november-24-death-of-john-knox-1572/>)

3. **Martin Luther** (10 November 1483 – 18 February 1546)

Luther died at the age of sixty-three after continuing to write and preach for an additional twenty-nine years. (Foxe, John. *Foxe’s Christian Martyrs: The Powerful Classic, Abridged and Updated*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2014. Print.)

5. **They Wanted the Church to Be Biblically Sound**

1. That was the whole point for Martin Luther nailing his 95 thesis to the door of the castle church
2. The church was not biblically sound
3. They were abusing and deceiving the people by their indulgences, the worship of Mary, saints and angels and their view of the Lord's Supper
4. But the Reformers were committed to the 4 activities of the early church
5. Acts 2:42 says, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

6. **They Loved People**

1. That's clear by the sacrifices they made and the confrontations with the Roman Catholic Church
2. They wanted the people to be able to hear the gospel and read the Bible in their language
3. They also wanted their lives to be seen by their love for one another and for their enemies
 1. Jesus said in John 13:35 (NASB) By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 2. Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-45 (NASB) You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

CONCLUSION

1. We need to be committed to the same things the Reformers were committed to
 1. To love Scripture
 2. To make the Bible easily assessable
 3. To systematically teach theology
 4. To live our convictions even if it costs us our lives

5. To be a biblically sound church
 6. To love people by giving them the gospel
2. So this year on October 31st, think about what happened 501 years ago so that you can have the Bible in your own language therefore allowing you to hear and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 3. Thank God for the men who gave their lives for you so you could know the truth and be saved.
 4. And if you're not saved this morning, you have an opportunity to give your life to Jesus right now.
 5. Let's pray.