

Reformation 2.0

2 Thess. 2:1-3

- 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,
- 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.
 - 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Th 2:1–3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Introduction

A recent survey asked a large number of professing Christians how we get to heaven: *Is it by good works or as an act of grace?* An alarming 73% of Protestants in mainline denominations said that God let's us into heaven based on our good works. Many of today's Protestants have embraced the very anti-gospel doctrine that Protestantism originated to protest! It is the same pattern we've seen throughout history. We get pulled downward into our self-powered salvation attempts with an almost gravitational force. So, this raises the question: *Who are the Luthers, the Augustines, the Pauls of the 21st century?* In other words, who are the people willing to stand up for the good news that

we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone? Where are the people willing to stand in those sho

IS THE REFORMATION RELEVANT TODAY?

Posted on **OCTOBER 31, 2013** Posted by **THADDEUS WILLIAMS**

In Kenda Creasy Dean's book, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*, it seems that the problem is far worse than anyone imagined. The National Study of Youth and Religion discovered that "the majority of American teenagers, who disproportionately call themselves mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic, harbor an attitude toward religion that one researcher described as 'benign positive regard.' While teenagers (and young adults) agree that religion is good, even important, they cannot explain why this is so, and many of them believe religion makes no difference to them personally. Most religious communities' central problem is not teen rebellion, but teenagers' 'benign whateverism.'"

[In an Article I read, on progressive Christianity I read where the church is headed without a new Reformation](#)

[What are Progressive Christians](#)

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to:
 - Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,
 - Believers and agnostics,
 - Women and men,
 - Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
 - Those of all classes and abilities;

The explosion of knowledge over the last five hundred years in the West has rendered most of the biblical and creedal presuppositions to be unbelievable. They rise out of a world that no longer exists. Yet churches continue to operate as if eternal truth can be placed into

these earthen vessels, proclaiming that in both the Bible and the creeds ultimate truth has been captured forever. The result is that Christianity seems less and less believable to more and more people. Can we separate the Christ experience from the dying explanations of the past? If we cannot then surely Christianity will continue its relentless journey into a declining irrelevance. If we can achieve this separation, however, the result will necessitate a reformulation of Christianity that is so radical that Christianity as we know it may well die in the process. Death or radical revision, however, appear to be the only realistic alternatives. I cast my vote for the latter. I would rather die in controversy than die in boredom. So I issue today a call for a new reformation. To frame the debate I post through this column "Twelve Theses." I state them as sharply and as provocatively as I can. People need to feel the dead weight of their traditional claims before they can develop the ability to open themselves and their ancient words to new possibilities. I now invite the Christian world into this debate.

Charting the New Reformation: The Twelve Theses

by John Shelby Spong on December 17, 2015 | 26 Comments

The explosion of knowledge over the last five hundred years in the West has rendered most of the biblical and creedal presuppositions to be unbelievable. They rise out of a world that no longer exists. Yet churches continue to operate as if eternal truth can be placed into these earthen vessels, proclaiming that in both the Bible and the creeds ultimate truth has been captured forever. The result is that Christianity seems less and less believable to more and more people. Can we separate the Christ experience from the dying explanations of the past? If we cannot then surely Christianity will continue its relentless journey into a declining irrelevance. If we can achieve this separation, however, the result will necessitate a reformulation of Christianity that is so radical that Christianity as we know it may well die in the process. Death or radical revision, however, appear to be the only realistic alternatives. I cast my vote for the latter. I would rather die in controversy than die in boredom. So I issue today a call for a new reformation. To frame the debate I post through this column "Twelve Theses." I state them as sharply and as provocatively as I can. People need to feel the dead weight of their traditional claims before they can develop the ability to open themselves and their ancient words to new possibilities. I now invite the Christian world into this debate.

The Twelve Theses

1 God

Understanding God in theistic categories as "a being, supernatural in power, dwelling somewhere external to the world and capable of invading the world with miraculous power" is no longer believable. Most God talk in liturgy and conversation has thus become meaningless.

2 Jesus – the Christ.

If God can no longer be thought of in theistic terms, then conceiving of Jesus as “the incarnation of the theistic deity” has also become a bankrupt concept.

3 Original Sin – The Myth of the Fall

The biblical story of the perfect and finished creation from which we human beings have fallen into “Original Sin” is pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.

4 The Virgin Birth

The virgin birth understood as literal biology is impossible. Far from being a bulwark in defense of the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth actually destroys that divinity.

5 Jesus as the Worker of Miracles

In a post-Newtonian world supernatural invasions of the natural order, performed by God or an “incarnate Jesus,” are simply not viable explanations of what actually happened.

6 Atonement Theology

Atonement theology, especially in its most bizarre “substitutionary” form, presents us with a God who is barbaric, a Jesus who is a victim and it turns human beings into little more than guilt-filled creatures. The phrase “Jesus died for my sins” is not just dangerous, it is absurd.

7 The Resurrection

The Easter event transformed the Christian movement, but that does not mean that it was the physical resuscitation of Jesus’ deceased body back into human history. The earliest biblical records state that “God raised him.” Into what, we need to ask. The experience of resurrection must be separated from its later mythological explanations.

This is absolutely absurd and you would do better just to leave religion all together why waste your time with this useless and meaningless exercise in futility

Martin Luther said that justification is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls...if this is true, then what is happening today? We are in dangerous times when you are hard pressed to find not only a church member but also a pastor who can articulate the biblical doctrine of justification.

Do we need another reformation?

The first reformation happened due to the obscurity and perversion of the biblical doctrine of justification by the Church of Rome. As a result few were able to know and experience the saving peace with God that comes through full dependence in the Lord Jesus Christ. So too today there are countless who do not live in cognizant recognition and appreciation of this doctrine.

The 5 *Solas* of the Reformation

In the process he brought about an entire revolution of church life, practice, and doctrine. Many of the doctrines that we Protestants take for granted find their crystallized expression in the thought of the Reformers. Theologians speak of the *Solas*, from the Latin word *sola*, meaning “alone.” Usually we list five *Solas*:

1. ***Sola Scriptura***, meaning “Scripture alone”: The Bible is the sole and final authority in all matters of life and godliness. The church looks to the Bible as its ultimate authority.

2. and 3. ***Sola Gratia***, meaning “grace alone,” and ***Sola Fide***, meaning “faith alone”: Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. It is not by works; we come to Christ empty-handed. This is the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, the cornerstone of the Reformation.

4. ***Solus Christus***, meaning “Christ alone”: There is no other mediator between God and sinful humanity than Christ. He alone, based on his work on the cross, grants access to the Father.

5. ***Soli Deo Gloria***, meaning “the glory of God alone”: All of life can be lived for the glory of God; everything we do can and should be done for his glory. The Reformers called this the doctrine of *vocation*, viewing our work and all the roles we play in life as a calling.

These doctrines form the bedrock of all that we believe, and the Reformers gave these doctrines their finest expression. In addition to the doctrines we routinely believe, the Reformers also laid out for us many of the practices of the church that we take for granted. The church had lost sight of the sermon, celebrating the Mass instead. The Reformers returned the sermon to the church service. In the case of the Puritans in England, they returned it with a vengeance.

Nothing Has Changed Since Trent

In response to the Reformers’ relentless assault, Rome formed its own Counter-Reformation, hoping to regain the authoritative ground it had lost. One key facet of their response was the Council of Trent, convened by Pope Paul III from 1545 to 1563. Trent was an opportunity for Rome to clarify and codify its dogma, specifically regarding salvation and other doctrines that were under fire from the Reformers. In that regard, Trent stands as one of the most influential and important councils in the history of the Catholic Church.

In short, the Council of Trent pronounced damnation on every major aspect of soteriology that the Reformers taught. In particular, it denies justification by faith alone.

If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema. (Canon IX)

Anathema, according to Catholic theology, means the excommunication and exclusion of a sinner from the members of the faithful. Roman Catholic theology therefore pronounces a curse of excommunication and damnation on anyone who preaches or believes that you are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus.

I. A high view of Scripture.

The needed reformation will not occur in the church until Scripture is returned to its preeminent place. The Word of God must be restored to its rightful position, governing the entire life of the church. Preachers must again rightly understand the supremacy of the Bible, not only its verbal inerrancy, but also its primary authority and absolute sufficiency. There must be a decisive and radical return to the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*.

A misconception surrounds the exact date of the Protestant Reformation as it is commonly thought to begin on Oct. 31, 1517. To be sure, Martin Luther's 95 theses on the Wittenburg door quickly gained traction in the new world of the printing press and the overall unrest surrounding the unjust practices of the Church. Long before Luther's dramatic appearance on the world stage, however, tremors of reform had been felt through the lives of people who dared to read the Bible in English to "commoners." Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253) became bishop of Lincoln in 1235 and believed that the chief duty of the "clergy" should be to preach the Bible—not give the Mass. He preached in English, not Latin, and clashed a number of times with the pope.

In the early 1300s, John Wycliffe openly stated that the Bible (not the pope) was the supreme authority for the Church. This created a huge backlash that ultimately ended in Wycliffe being banished to obscurity until his death in 1384. Jan Hus, the rector of the University of Prague, became the champion of Wycliffe's teaching. Hus challenged the authority of the pope to issue indulgences (a gift of merit by the pope to free imprisoned souls in purgatory) and reaffirmed the primacy of the Bible as the only authority for the Church. He was condemned to death as a heretic in 1415.

By the time Luther stood before Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, on April 18, 1521, and uttered his famous statement (quoted above), the thunder of reformation had been heard and was gaining momentum. Slowly the grip of

the papacy was loosened, as many of the most nefarious teachings of the Church were shown to be erroneous. Luther's grand message was that a person could stand confident before God on the basis of "merely" trusting God's acceptance of Jesus' work in their behalf by faith. And so works were replaced by words that were founded by the Word of God. By faith alone a person was justified before the judgment throne of God by believing it was so on the basis of Holy Scripture alone.

For the reformers, *sola Scriptura* meant that the Bible was the only divinely revealed Word and therefore the believer's true authority for sound doctrine and righteous living. They understood the Word of God to be powerful, life-altering, and wholly sufficient "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Like the church fathers who had come before them, they rightly viewed God's Word as the authoritative foundation for their Christian faith. They embraced the inerrancy, infallibility, and historical accuracy of Scripture without question, gladly submitting to its divine truth.

Though they were part of a major social upheaval, the reformers understood that the real battle was not over politics, money, or land. It was a fight for biblical truth. And as the truth of the gospel shone forth, empowered by the Holy Spirit, it ignited the flames of revival.

Honoring the Author of the Word

That spirit of uncompromised commitment to God's Word is mostly absent from the evangelical landscape today. While many give lip service to the primacy of Scripture, the popular trends in the church tend to push aside the standard of God's Word, softening the truth or suppressing it altogether for the sake of attracting the world.

But let's be clear: Any movement that does not honor God's Word cannot rightfully claim to honor Him. If we are to reverence the omnipotent Sovereign of the universe, we must wholly submit to the things He has spoken (**Hebrews 1:1–2**). Anything less is to treat Him with contempt and rebel against His lordship. Nothing is more offensive to the Author of Scripture than to disregard, deny, or distort the truth He has revealed (**Revelation 22:18–19**). To mishandle the Word of God is to misrepresent the One who wrote it. To reject its claims is to call Him a liar. To ignore its message is to snub that which the Holy Spirit inspired.

As God's perfect revelation, the Bible reflects the glorious character of its Author. Because He is the God of truth, His Word is infallible. Because He cannot lie, His Word is inerrant. Because He is the King of kings, His Word is absolute and supreme. Those who wish to please Him must obey His Word. Conversely, those who fail to honor the Scriptures above every other truth-claim dishonor God Himself.

Because the Reformers recognized Jesus Christ alone as the Head of the church, they gladly submitted to His Word as the sole authority within the church. Thus, they acknowledged what all true believers throughout history have affirmed—that the Word of God alone is our supreme rule for life and doctrine. Consequently, they also confronted any false authority that might attempt to usurp Scripture's rightful place; and in so doing, they exposed the corruption of the entire Roman Catholic system.

Defending the Faith

Believers today are likewise called to defend the truth against all who would seek to undermine the authority of Scripture. As Paul wrote, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (**2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV**). Jude similarly instructed his readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (**Jude 3**). In referring to "the faith," Jude was not pointing to an indefinable body of religious doctrines; rather, he was speaking of the objective truths of

Scripture that comprise the Christian faith (cf. **Acts 2:42**; **2 Timothy 1:13–14**).

The authors of the New Testament did not discover the truths of the Christian faith through mystical religious experiences. Rather God, with finality and certainty, delivered His complete body of revelation in Scripture. Any system that claims new revelation or new doctrine must be disregarded as false (**Revelation 22:18–19**). God’s Word is all-sufficient; it is all that believers need as they contend for the faith and oppose apostasy within the church. From the very beginning, the battle between good and evil has been a battle for the truth. The serpent, in the Garden of Eden, began his temptation by questioning the truthfulness of God’s words. Casting doubt on the straightforward revelation of God has been Satan’s tactic ever since (cf. **John 8:44**; **2 Corinthians 11:3-4**).

With eternity at stake, it is no wonder that Scripture reserves its harshest words of condemnation for those who would put lies in the mouth of God. The serpent was immediately cursed in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:14**), and Satan told of his inevitable demise (v. 15). In Old Testament Israel, false prophecy was a capital offense (**Deuteronomy 13:5, 10**), a point vividly illustrated by Elijah’s slaughter of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal following the showdown on Mount Carmel (**1 Kings 18:19, 40**). But the Israelites often failed to expel false prophets; and by welcoming error into their midst, they also invited God’s judgment (**Jeremiah 5:29–31**). Consider the Lord’s attitude towards those who would exchange His true Word for a counterfeit:

Thus says the Lord God, “Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. . . . They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘The Lord declares,’ when the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The Lord declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?” Therefore, thus says the Lord God, “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord God. “So My hand will be against

the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 13:3-9; cf., Isaiah 30:9-13; Jeremiah 5:29-31)

The point of that passage is unmistakable: God hates those who misrepresent His Word or speak lies in His name. The New Testament responds to false prophets with equal severity (cf. 1 Timothy 6:3–5; 2 Timothy 3:1–9; 1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7–11). God does not tolerate those who falsify or fake divine revelation. It is an offense He takes personally, and His retribution is swift and deadly. To sabotage biblical truth in any way—by adding to it, subtracting from it, or mixing it with error—is to invite divine wrath (Galatians 1:9; 2 John 9–11). Any distortion of the Word is an affront against the Trinity, and especially against the Spirit of God because of His intimate relationship to the Scriptures.

Martin Luther put it this way, “Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it has no basis in God’s Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil.” [1] And elsewhere, “Whatever does not have its origin in the Scriptures is surely from the devil himself.” [2]

Adapted from *Strange Fire*.

2. A high view of God.

There also must be the proper recognition of God’s holy, transcendent character. A new reformation will come only when the people of God regain a lofty vision of Him as the sovereign Ruler of all. The unhealthy state of the church at this time is due in large part to a low view of God. This, in turn, has led to a high view of man. Not until there is the restoration of an elevated view of God will the church be

restored to her former glory and have an effect upon the world again.

Michael Griffiths, the British writer, said, “Christians collectively seem to be suffering from a strange amnesia. A **high** proportion of people that go to church have forgotten what it’s all about. Week by week they attend the services in a special building. They go through their particular time-honored routine. They give little thought to the purpose of what they’re doing. The Bible talks about the bride of Christ, but the church today seems like a ragged Cinderella, hideous among the ashes.”

It is absolutely essential that the church perceive itself as an institution for the glory of God. You understand that? Now, that's so basic that it just—it seems like you wouldn't even need to say it. But I believe the church, in general, in our country, has descended from that level to become a church for the help of men. And the church thinks its goal is to help people feel better about themselves, to play psychological games with them, to patch up their marriages, to give them placebos, you know, like patching up a marriage; like Marabel Morgan said, by putting on a black negligee, a rose in your teeth, and getting under the dining room table and winking at your husband, that kind of stuff. I mean, if you've got a rotten marriage, you can do that and still have a rotten marriage, because there's some Biblical foundations, and there are relationships to **God** that are required between people if they're going to have right relationships with each other. And those kinds of placebos really aren't the answer; but we have reduced the church from an, from a body or an organism which has, as its goal, to know and glorify **God** to, to an organization which has its objective to make people feel better about themselves. And that's not the point.

If you know **God** right, ultimately you'll get to you, and you'll be a whole lot better off. The answer to everything in your life is to know God, true? Sure, the Lord's the beginning of all wisdom. And when you have a right relationship with God, and you take **God** seriously, and you get rightly connected with God, then all other things fall out in their proper place. That is not to say we're unconcerned about people's needs. We are concerned, as **God** is, as Christ is. But it is to say that there is a balance, and everything begins with a **high view** of God. We must take **God** seriously. As I've said before, I, I sometimes wish that **God** would strike some people dead during the offering. I mean I don't wish that real strongly, but I, because I might be the guy. But I mean, some dramatic way to illustrate that **God** must be taken seriously. We say, oh, you know, somebody dies or something happened, "How could **God** let that happen?" Listen, friend, that isn't even the question. The question is what are you and I doing alive? A holy **God** should've blasted us out of existence long ago. That's the issue. And because **God** is gracious is no reason for you and I to be complacent and indifferent. We got to take **God** seriously. I, I get righteously indignant at these preachers and so forth who drag **God** off His throne and turn Him into some kind of a servant for men, who has to do all the things they demand. This is an irreverent age. It's irreverent. It does not know how to worship. Even what it calls worship, basically, in many cases, is simply inducing a warm feeling, and they think that's worship. It knows little about God, and as I said in the series on worship, we are too many Marthas and not enough Marys. We're busy serving all the time, and we don't know what it is to bow down and wash Jesus' feet. We don't know what it is to tremble at God's Word. We don't know what it is to have an awesome confrontation with an infinitely holy **God** that leaves us broken over our own sinfulness and, therefore, usable to Him for His glory. We want to feel good about ourselves. We want ourselves to feel good. We want to get all that we need, have all our problems solved, and we're being sold a, a sack of religious psychology that is called the church.

Listen, I really, I'll go a step further and say you could take 90 percent of all the books that are being written today and bury them in the sea, and we wouldn't be gone, we wouldn't lose anything. Because they're just a bunch of placebos, superficially attacking them, attacking problems that they can't solve. I go back in history to eras when the church was holy, and they had very few things to read, but the things they did read told them how to connect up with God.

3. A high view of the pulpit.

2 Timothy 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Timothy 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

2 Timothy 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The question posed to Stanley was this...

What do you think about preaching verse-by-verse messages through books of the Bible?

Stanley's answer...

Guys that preach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible— that is just cheating. It's cheating because that would be easy, first of all. That isn't how you grow people. No one in the Scripture modeled that. There's not one example of that.

In an age where pulpits have been replaced by Plexiglas stands fronting mockups of Opra's TV stage, and where Genevan robes have been ousted for tee shirts, torn jeans, and flip flops, and where exegetical, Christ-centered preaching has given sway to "live your best life now" pep talks, we do indeed have a lot of work to do. The pulpit, though, is where this work needs to start.

A minister once said, "The pulpit is the most dreadful place on the earth." We may ask why a called minister of the Gospel would say such a thing. Why? Why is the pulpit so dreadful? Its just a place where a man, twice a week, or so, gives a short address to people from the Bible on a spiritual lesson which may help them make better decisions in life. If that is your view of the pulpit, then an early retirement, before next Sunday, is very much in order for you.

In the words of historian Michael Reeves, the Protestant Reformation was not simply "a negative movement" away from Rome. It was "a positive movement" toward the Gospel. It was a re-discovery of the *verbum incarnatum*—the eternal *Logos* made flesh—so that now, in the words of Heinrich Bullinger in the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), "the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God." Such a movement must emerge again beginning with many supposedly "evangelical" congregations who stand in deep need of reformation, sixteenth-century style.

There is likewise a great need for a reformation of the evangelical pulpit. To reform the pulpit is to reform the church. What is needed is not simply more preaching, but God-enthralled, Christ-magnifying, Spirit-empowered preaching. If this is to occur, the church must regain a high view of the pulpit. As was prevalent during the Reformation, the preaching of the Word must be central in the worship of the church in this generation.

Never has the need been greater for such a reformation. Our Word-starved pulpits beg for stalwarts of the faith to bring the Book to their congregations. However, only God can give such men to the church. Writing more than one hundred years ago, Charles H. Spurgeon stated:

A Reformation is as much needed now as in Luther's day, and by God's grace we shall have it, if we trust in Him and publish His truth. The cry is, "Overturn, overturn, overturn, till He shall come whose right it is."

But, mark ye this, if the grace of God be once more restored to the church in all its fullness, and the Spirit of God be poured out from on high, in all His sanctifying energy, there will come such a shaking as has never been seen in our days. We want such an one as Martin Luther to rise from his tomb. If Martin

Luther were now to visit our so-called reformed churches, he would say with all his holy boldness, “I was not half a reformer when I was alive before, now I will make a thorough work of it.”

what convictions made Luther great.

- A Deep Conviction about the Word
- A Relentless Drive in the Study
- A Firm Commitment to the Text
- A Passionate Delivery in the Pulpit
- A Fearless Declaration of the Truth

Luther's "Firm Commitment to the Text." Steve Lawson writes:

For Luther, the sermon began with the biblical text, stayed with the text, and ended with the text. Simply put, he was a Word-driven preacher. His introduction served simply to orient the listener to the biblical text. The main body of his sermon explained and applied the passage. His conclusion made a final summation of and appeal with the text. Every portion of the sermon was designed to set forth the biblical text to the congregation.

As he stood in the pulpit, what came from Luther's mouth was a direct extension of his diligent study of the Scriptures. The deeper he had plunged into the text, the higher he rose in the pulpit, and the higher his listeners were elevated in worship. Luther focused on the depth of his preaching and trusted God for the breadth of its influence with his listeners. He knew that whatever success came from his Bible-saturated sermon could be attributed only to God Himself. Indeed, there can be no explanation for the far-reaching effectiveness of Luther's pulpit ministry apart from God sovereignly choosing to honor His Word. To be sure, God honors men who honor His Word, and Luther was one such man. (62)

In this critical hour of church history, pastors must recapture the glory of biblical preaching, as in the days of the Reformation. Preachers must return to true exposition that is Word-driven, God-glorifying, and Christ-exalting. May the Lord of the church raise up a new generation of expositors, men armed with the sword of the Spirit, to once again preach the Word. The plea of Spurgeon, who witnessed the decline of dynamic preaching in his lifetime, must be heard and answered in this day:

We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitefields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foemen's ears. We have dire need of such. Whence will they come to us? They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the Church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument in the hand of the Spirit for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land... . I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches.

Albert Mohler wrote "The Scandal of Biblical illiteracy: Its our Problem" on Jan 20, 2016 ... he detailed that people don't read the Bible. He wrote that research shows that less than half of adults can name one of four gospels. Sixty Percent of Americans can't name 5 of the 10 commandments. "Another

survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife."

He concludes by writing, "We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs. The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.

This generation must get deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy, or a frighteningly large number of Americans—Christians included—will go on thinking that Sodom and Gomorrah lived happily ever after."

2 Tim 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. **3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fable