



The Church Grows Up

Part 3

Reformation Period
1500's – 1600's

Prepared by – Mike Southwick
[Good News Bible Studies – Mike Southwick](#)

Key Factors That Led To the Reformation

- Emperor Charlemagne's attempt to reunite the “Holy Roman Empire” and make himself the “Supreme Ruler” continued to create an opportunity (merging the sacred with the secular) for corruption and compromise to exist within the church – **800 AD**
- The **Great Schism** which split the Western Church (headquartered in Rome) from the Eastern Church (headquartered in Constantinople) – **1054 AD** which created a whole different set of doctrines/practices (many of them “Orthodox”) and a different set of Church leaders and Church councils.
- The rise of “**dissenters**” (such as The Waldensians in 1173 AD) – who were also Christ followers but rejected certain doctrines (such as Baptismal regeneration – the idea that salvation takes place by the act of Baptism) of both the Western and Eastern Orthodox Church.

Key Factors That Led To the Reformation

- The Magna Carta (Great paper) was written in **AD 1215**. It is sometimes called The Great Charter of Freedom and begins to set the stage for a cry for personal, social and religious freedom!
- This idea of “personal, social, and religious freedom” opened a door to spread the “Word of God” to all people (including the commoner) and helped to quicken the concept of a “printed” Bible that all could read – this was a HUGE step towards eventual reform!
- The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg led to the printing of the first Bible in **AD 1456** (from the Latin Vulgate).
- Although the Gutenberg Bible was printed in Latin – it will open the door to a later printed version of the first English Bible by William Tyndale (1535)

Key Factors That Led To the Reformation

- The Creation of the Church of England (Anglican Church) was the result of a decision by King Henry VIII to separate from the Roman Catholic Church in AD 1534 and this one significant event (among others) continued to open doors for the “common person” to read and understand God’s Word in their own language which leads to a “new sense of freedom” unheard of in the centuries prior.
- Although the Church at large (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and now the Anglican Church) will continue to struggle with the loss of “power” (both secular and sacred), it will be the “Reformers” whom The Lord will use to steer His people (The Called Ones – The Church) toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- The Peasants Revolt (which did not produce completely positive results), led to further disenchantment of the common person toward the Church clergy due to their continued corruption and abuse of power

All of this paved the way for reform and we'll look at five men who made significant impact on the future of the Church through what is commonly referred to as “The Reformation Period”.

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- His early life:

1. He was baptized the day after he was born (Nov. 10, 1483)
2. His father (Hans) worked in the copper mines and later operated the mines
3. His father's intentions were for Luther to become a lawyer and set his education for that as his main pursuit
4. Martin Luther's account is that in 1505 during a serious thunderstorm he was compelled to give his life to the Lord and become a monk. He subsequently sold his books, left law school and entered the Augustinian monastery July 17, 1505

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- His monastic life:

1. He became a zealot in his religious pursuits and devoted himself to fasting, long hours of prayer, various pilgrimages and constant confession of sins
2. He is known for this statement; “If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would have indeed been among them”
3. He was ordained to the priesthood and proceeded to teach theology at the University of Wittenberg

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- It was his pursuit of “justification by faith” (Romans 1:17) that will put him at odds with the Roman Catholic Church:
 - Luther came to believe that God’s righteousness is something that He bestows as a gift (free gift) that is given or provided through Christ
 - This belief in justification by faith emerged into the doctrine of salvation by God’s grace and God’s grace alone, and without human merit (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - This doctrine is nothing new for it is precisely what Jesus taught and the Apostles embraced and taught as well

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”
(Romans 1:17)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther's conflict with the Roman Catholic Church grows – especially as to how one sought penance or payment for sins:
 - The solution that the church provided for “absolution” of sins was through payment in the form of indulgences
 - Although these “indulgences” were initially granted or primarily given as a means of an easier life in “purgatory” (another false teaching), they eventually led to **a means to gain one's own salvation**

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- The church (more specifically the clergy) began to “sell” those indulgences as a means of absolving one’s own individual sins or for the sins of a person already in purgatory:
 - Those funds were used for the renovation of church buildings (i.e. St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome), as well as lining the pockets of those in receipt of the funds and this of course led to the worst of corruption of the Roman Church
 - Luther is often quoted as saying; “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs”.

All of this led to Luther being
labeled as a heretic and his
teaching created quite a
controversy throughout Europe

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- The ultimate division between what Luther believed (salvation by faith) and the Roman Catholic Church taught/embraced (salvation by works) was becoming even more apparent each time Luther preached a sermon, wrote an article, a commentary, or book:
 - All of this led Luther to further divest himself from the Roman Catholic Church and even **boldly declared the Pope to be the Antichrist**
 - In essence this was the beginning of what would later be called “The Reformation” or “The Protestant Movement”, for there was a series of protests or reforms that Luther declared needed to take place within the Roman Church

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther declared that these reforms needed to take place within the Roman Church:
 - All ecclesiastical abuses (i.e. the exercise of indulgences) needed to cease
 - Shrink the size or amount of hierarchal authority (cardinals, bishops, etc.)
 - Abolition of the requirement of pilgrimages
 - Eliminating the excessive number of “holy days”

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther declared that these reforms needed to take place within the Roman Church:
 - The suppression of nunneries
 - Cease the requirement for clerical celibacy)
 - Reforming the universities
 - Reunification with the Bohemians
 - Basic reform of public morality

Despite all that Luther attempted to do to reform the Church from within, it became necessary to make a formal break from the Church at Rome

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther made three initial changes that created conflict with the Roman Church:
 - The celebration Eucharist (Communion or The Lord's Supper) was returned to the "laity" and the practice or dogma of transubstantiation was rejected.
 - He did promote the teaching that in observing the Lord's Supper that the recipient was affirming the Lord's presence but not in the extreme literal sense that was taught by the Roman Church
 - He also rejected the teaching that by taking of the elements that a sacrifice was being offered to God
 - Luther taught that Baptism in on no way brings salvation by itself. He believed/taught that salvation was by faith and baptism naturally followed as an outward act of obedience
 - Luther taught that Penance (absolution of sin) was received by faith in Christ

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- These changes in teachings and practice created new problems for Martin Luther:
 - He was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church on June 15, 1520
 - He was called to the General Assembly in the town of Worms known as the “Diet of Worms” to renounce his heresy and reaffirm the doctrines of the Holy Roman Church
 - This was Luther’s reply; “*Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me amen.*”
 - Luther was declared by the Emperor himself (Charles V) to be an outlaw and a heretic. His literature was banned from the Church

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther was subsequently exiled to Wartburg Castle and while there he worked tirelessly on **translating the New Testament from Greek into German**. In addition to this he made additional contributions to the advancement of Christianity:
 - He wrote various catechisms (summary of doctrine) and doctrinal statements
 - He wrote various collections of liturgy (public forms of worship) and how to maintain order within the Church
 - He helped to organize a well-balanced Church government structure
 - He helped to create an avenue for other “dissenters” who perhaps felt he didn’t go far enough with his reforms. This newfound “freedom” in Christ would spawn other movements (i.e., Swiss reformers, Anabaptists, Brethren, and Calvinism etc.) that would create a means by which Truth would prevail and error exposed

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther's impact on the Roman Catholic Church:
 - Although the Roman Catholic Church in many ways remains steeped in ritual, mysticism, and error, the fact is the reforms established by Luther have even had an impact on their traditions and practices
 - Even though Luther found the need to separate from the Roman Church (as did many others), his legacy of reform towards a genuine salvation by grace through faith in Christ, has continued to impact even those who remain steeped in the ritual of the Catholic Church
- Luther died on February 18, 1546, from heart complications and he was buried underneath the pulpit in the Castle Church in Wittenberg

Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531)

- His early life:

1. He was born in Switzerland to a prominent middle-class family, and was the seventh of eight sons
2. He would have been a contemporary of Martin Luther
3. Zwingli renounced his position in the Catholic priesthood about 3 years after Luther

Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531)

- He became the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland and the founder of the Swiss Reformed Churches
 1. The Presbyterian Church and Church of Christ would be the denominations that are connected to Zwingli's reforms
 2. It was Zwingli and his followers who abandoned the use of instruments during their worship services
 3. He was outspoken against ecclesiastical hierarchy and was against the use of “images”, “icons”, or “relics” in public worship services
 4. He practiced “expository preaching” and broke away from many of the common liturgical practices of the Catholic Mass

Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531)

- He became the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland and the founder of the Swiss Reformed Churches
 1. He was an advocate for the “authority of the scripture” and rejected those religious practices that were not supported by the Bible
 2. He pushed for a change in usage of the monasteries – desiring them to be used instead as hospitals and other “welfare” type institutions
 3. Despite his outright rejection of Roman Catholic Dogma – he rejected many of the “radical” positions of other “dissenters” known as the “Anabaptists” which resulted in a rejected of their teaching (specifically on the topic of “adult baptisms or “re-baptisms”) which led to persecution by Zwingli and his followers against the Anabaptists

Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531)

- Zwingli and his followers were not very sympathetic to the Anabaptists and persecuted them:
 1. Although this may have been bad for the Anabaptists this continued persecution led to those separatists' groups fleeing this oppression and drove them towards seeking a life and pursuit of religious liberty
 2. It will be the Puritans, Quakers, Baptists (descendants of these Anabaptists) and others who will find such religious liberty in a new land called America!

John Calvin (1509–1564)

- Background information:

1. He was a French Christian Theologian
2. He was known for his writings and the originator of the system of Christian Theology known as Calvinism:
 - His approach to the Biblical text was in a more historical and grammatical manner as opposed to relying on the various commentators from the past
 - This detailed evaluation drove him to the Bible as the only source of truth. He felt that the educational facilities of his time lost sight of this
 - He was a strong advocate of the absolute sovereignty and holiness of God

John Calvin (1509–1564)

- He is well known for the “Five Points of Calvinism”
 - Total Depravity – every person born into the world is enslaved to sin
 - Unconditional Election – God has chosen those people whom He will bring to Himself
 - Limited Atonement – only the sins of the elect were atoned for by the death of Jesus Christ
 - Irresistible Grace – the grace of God compels the “elect” sinner to cooperate, repent, and freely come to follow Christ
 - Perseverance of the Saints – God is sovereign and those whom He has called will persevere to the end. Those who fall away either did not have true faith or will return to God

John Calvin (1509–1564)

- Some of the reforms that John Calvin instituted
 - He believed and taught that the punishment of men's infidelity should be as equal to the punishment that a woman faced
 - He developed a catechism/confession of faith which all citizens were to affirm
 - He taught that spousal abuse should be abolished
 - He promoted moral standards
 - He taught against the practice of witchcraft

John Calvin (1509–1564)

- He instituted/organized what he considered a Biblical form of Church government
 - Doctors – an office held by a person who had theological training/scholarship. This person was a teacher/trainer/equipper of the members in the church
 - Pastors – an office held by a person whose responsibility was to preach, administer the sacraments, exercise pastoral discipline, teaching and admonishing the people
 - Deacons – an office held by a person who oversaw the ministries of the church (specifically in the area of charity, hospital care, anti-poverty programs)
 - Elders – 12 laymen whose role was to oversee more specifically in keeping people in line (sort of a moral police force) and maintaining moral purity within the church

John Calvin (1509–1564)

He is best known for his position on predestination and election which continues to be supported by those denominations that embrace the same

William Tyndale (1494-1536)

- He was a champion of the English Reformation
- He championed the cause of translating the Bible into English. He once said; “The Scripture should be available even to a boy that driveth the plough”
- Ironically it was his works in translating the Scripture into English that caused him to be labeled as a heretic
 - Much of his work (about 90%) formed the basis for what will become known as the “Authorized Version”
 - His translation is believed to be from the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts instead of the Latin Vulgate (used by Martin Luther). The Vulgate was translated from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the O.T., including the Apocrypha) which continues to fuel the debate over accuracy

William Tyndale (1494-1536)

- Sadly, William Tyndale was arrested and tried for heresy in 1536 because of his translation work and wanting the Scriptures to be available to the common man:
 - Tyndale was strangled (they say it was mercifully done – not sure how you do that) and then burned at the stake on October 6, 1536
 - Tyndale's final words; "Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes"
 - Tyndale's prayer was eventually answered; as several English Bibles will be translated, sponsored and promoted by the King of England (Henry VIII)
 - ❖ The first "authorized version" by Henry VIII was called the Great Bible
 - ❖ This will eventually lay the groundwork for the King James Version of the Bible which was sponsored and authorized by King James I of England in 1611

John Knox (1514-1572)

- Background information:
 - He was of Catholic background and he is first mentioned as a priest in 1540
 - After his departure from the Catholic Church, he will become known as the Father of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland
 - Knox himself was arrested for heresy and forced to row on the French slave ships. While in custody he was asked to renounce his Protestant beliefs, but he refused
 - He returns to Scotland in May of 1556 but only to face more opposition so he returns to France and then finally back to Edinburgh, Scotland on May 2, 1559, where he will organize the Church in Scotland
 - Civil war was on the horizon within Scotland

John Knox (1514-1572)

- Knox became the champion of religious and political reform in Scotland:
 - He set out to purge the churches of heresy and immorality
 - He destroyed most if not all of the monasteries
 - France wanted control of Scotland and Scotland wanted her freedom!
 - To maintain freedom from the French required help from the English and along with that came the religious strings of the Church of England
 - The relationship between Scotland and the Church of England had all sorts of political and religious challenges/compromise but the significant shift toward religious reform and the break from France opens the door for Scotland to exercise their “religious freedom” at least within the confines/control of the Church of England.

John Knox (1514-1572)

- In the end Knox will win out (with a slight political compromise with England) allowing for Scotland to deal with their own ecclesiastical (religious) issues
 - The Roman Church lost its primary influence; as all religious authority dealing with doctrine, worship and basic church government was now in the hands of the Church of Scotland
 - Protestantism became the recognized national religion of Scotland beginning in 1560 and they will adopt their own constitution of the new Church
 - The church government and basic beliefs are similar in nature to the Presbyterian Church. Priests were replaced with ministers and the parish was governed by elders

John Knox (1514-1572)

One interesting little factoid is that John Knox' gravesite at the Church of St. Giles has (along with others) been covered over by a visitors parking lot (car park). He is allegedly buried under parking space (car park number) 23

Concluding Thoughts

- The Reformers helped lay a new foundation for the church by making the “Holy Scriptures” available in a common language and due in large part to the invention of the printing press, made those scriptures available to the common person
- The Reformers fought against “ecclesiastical hierarchy” and opened doors that have been closed since the days of the Apostles and early centuries of the church by “reviving” the internal moving and leading of the Holy Spirit – something that the “organized church” had suppressed for centuries
- Those who set out to reform the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Anglican Church (The Church of England) spawned a later movement that is often referred to as “The Great Awakening” or “The Great Revival”
- These reformers of the 16th century (1500’s) helped to lay the foundation for the “Revivals” that occurred in the 17th through 21st centuries (1600’s-2000’s) – the subject of our last and final lesson in the Series – “The Church Grows Up”