

05 - 95 Theses - 2017-10-29

Call to Worship: 1 Samuel 2:1

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 2:12-36

Sermon: "500 Years of the 95 Theses Part 5" 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Benediction: 1 Samuel 2:2

INTRODUCTION

500 years ago, in the 1500s, in Europe, the sons of Eli had become sons of the Devil; that is, the pastors of the churches had become corrupt; they did not know the Lord.

Those church officials who had made their way to the top of the church hierarchy sent their servants to the worshipers with, as it were, a three-pronged fork; those servants stuck the Pope's fork into what belonged to the people, and claimed whatever they could pull out as their own. That is, they devised the selling of indulgences, and many other schemes, to reach into the purses of the people, even the very poor, and take for themselves whatever they could pull out.

In the days of the Old Covenant, the law of God commanded that when a family came to worship at the altar, the fat of the sacrificial lamb be devoted to God by fire, then a specified part of the meat be given to the priests for their own food, and then most of the meat be eaten and enjoyed by the family that brought the sacrifice. But, not willing to have the people devote themselves first to Christ, and not content with what rightfully could be said to belong to pastors of Christ's church for their own food, the pope sent his servants to the worshipers and demanded that what belonged to God alone be turned over to him. You must not call God alone, "Father," but you must call me Father, Papa, Pope. You must not look to Christ alone as the Head of the church for remission of sins without money, without price. You must look to Antichrist as head of the church; and you must bring money, because there is a price.

From time to time one of the worshipers dared object, saying, "You may take what belongs to me, but don't take what belongs to God!" But when any such arose, the pope's servants called him a heretic, threatened to use force on him, and, in many cases, made good those threats.

Yes, 500 years ago, the sin of the Pope and his brothers the Cardinals and Bishops, and their servants, the indulgence preachers, in these things, was very great before the Lord, not least of all because it made men despise the worship of God in His church, and mock the holy ordinances of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That despising of the worship of Christ because of the corruptions of the Pope and his servants, was the very problem described by Martin Luther near the end of the 95 Theses, in theses 81 through 89. In thesis 90, Luther rejected the Pope's way of trying to solve that problem. He then concluded by proposing a biblical remedy, a Godly solution, in theses 91 through 95.

TEXT

1 Samuel 2:12-36

BODY

- I. 81-89 When the Practices of Religious Leaders, Especially Their Financial Practices, Seem Unbiblical, the People of the Churches and the Public Will Have Legitimate Questions
 - A. 82-83, 89 Religious leader, why does it seem that the things you do are not primarily for the spiritual good of souls, but for the financial good of your organization and yourself?
 1. In Luther's time, Pope Leo X was selling indulgence to get money with which to make lavish improvements to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
 2. In Luther's time, an impious, unreligious man could, by paying him money, influence the Pope to do something for the benefit of a friend or relative of his who was a pious, devout Christian. But if it were in the Pope's power to do that favor for that devout believer, why hadn't he already done it out of love, instead of waiting to be paid to do it?
 - B. 85 Religious leader, why does it seem that you sometimes ignore your own traditions and documents, and other times dust them off and insist on them, according to whether or not they serve your present agenda?
 1. In the case of Eli's sons, it was the Levitical laws for worship in the tabernacle
 - a) their priesthood and right to food
 - b) the share they were to have
 2. In the case of the indulgence preachers in the time of Luther, it was the penitential canons.
 - C. 86 Religious leader, why do you and your organization, with lots of money in the bank from previous donations, press your donors (even the poor) to give even more money to fund your latest project?
 1. Luther heard the people asking, "Why doesn't the pope, whose wealth is vast, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than the money of poor believers?"
 2. Larry Vincent: You are not responsible to fund anyone else's ministry.
 - D. Let us learn to ask good questions, not be afraid to do so

81-89 When the Practices of Religious Leaders, Especially Their Financial Practices, Seem Unbiblical, the People of the Churches and the Public Will Have Legitimate Questions

- II. 90 To Repress These Very Sharp Arguments of the Laity by Force Alone, and Not to Resolve Them By Giving Reasons, Is to Produce Trouble for Christ's Church
 - A. The Pope's idea for dealing with troubling questions and criticism

1. In that case, real force was a possibility
 2. In our case, it is not actual physical violence, but other kinds of pressure exerted rather than questions answered or arguments considered
- B. 81 Even the most learned men cannot rescue religious leaders from irreverence if those leaders do not give good answers to the people's legitimate questions
- C. What will be trouble be?
1. To Expose the Church and Its Leadership to the Ridicule of Their Enemies
 2. To Make Christians Unhappy
 - a) It is not a state of happiness to see something wrong with a religious leader's actions, to ask the reasons for it, and then to be met only with force
 - b) They end up with a low view of worship in Christ's church Luther: he [the pope] and the preachers of indulgences must be warned that the people should not be given such an open occasion to say, as the priest Eli once did, that because of his sons "the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt" (1 Samuel 2:17).
- D. APPLICATION
1. Let us make informed judgments about religious leaders based partly on whether, when questioned, they give us answers or just pressure.

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- III. 91 If the Church Would Simply Preach and Worship and Live According to the Word of Christ, All of These Doubts Could Be Resolved, Or Would Not Even Exist
[Read the couplet, then explain.]
- A. This is Luther's idea for dealing with the troubling questions and criticisms
 - B. 92 Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace!
 1. meaning false messages of peace with God when those who believe such do not actually gain peace with God
 2. Jeremiah 6:13-14 "Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. (14) They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace.
 - C. 93 Blessed be all those preachers who say to the people, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!
 1. meaning, those who preach Jesus Christ crucified when the people have not been hearing it

2. 1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
3. Jesus Christ crucified for sinners!

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91 If the Church Would Simply Preach and Worship and Live According to the Word of Christ, All of These Doubts Could Be Resolved, Or Would Not Even Exist

- IV. 94, 95 Rather than being provided a false security of peace, Christians should be taught to be confident of entering heaven through a diligent following of Christ, their Head, through many tribulations and through death itself
- A. Luther references this passage: Acts 14:21-22 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."
 - B. Do not look back at how you
 1. walked the aisle
 2. made a decision
 3. prayed a prayer
 4. did good works
 - C. Instead, have eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, once crucified for you, now in heaven preparing your place in the Father's house
 1. follow Him through all, whether ease or trouble
 2. follow Him through whatever death He has ordained for you
 3. be confident of entering heaven in the end

CONCLUSION

Today is October 29, 2017. Two days from now will be the 500th anniversary of the posting of Martin Luther's 95 Theses. So, this month, we have been considering together some of the gospel truths that had been obscured in those days of darkness, that after lying in darkness, were brought to light again in Martin Luther's 95 Theses.

First Week: **Repentance** as preached by Jesus not as imagined by men

Do Not Mistake What the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Repent,"

He did not mean a one-time outward religious experience, in which a church official pronounces forgiveness of sins, but an inner change in which the sinner is humbled before God and made submissive to Christ, and by which his sins are forgiven by God, and which produces a whole life of putting to death sin in the flesh, so as to live for Christ.

Second Week: **Salvation** by what Jesus Christ requires, not by what man requires

Do not heed what man says are the requirements for you to be saved, lest you receive a salvation that is only from men. Instead, heed what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ says is required for salvation, so to receive a salvation that is from God.

People are deceived by preachers promising of salvation if they will do what man requires. But that is not Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine is that the requirements of men do not save anyone, but that any truly repentant sinner, trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, has all the blessings of Christ, without regard to man-made requirements.

Third Week: The **Authority** of Jesus Christ rather than the authority of mere men

Take care, because you are tempted to have some regard for the bible, and to think yourself a Christian, while not actually receiving the Lord Jesus Christ on the authority of God the Father, but instead receiving mere men on merely human authority.

It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, to commend these two things at the same time: salvation for all who perform certain acts preached by men, and the need of true repentance for salvation.

The Christian does not grow strong in the Lord by means of performing certain works required by men on mere human authority; instead, the Christian grows strong in the Lord as he exercises himself in the good works of love commanded by the Lord ---OR---
We Are Sanctified Not Through Works Commanded By Men, But Through Works of Love Commanded By God

Fourth week: The Preciousness of the **Gospel**, and the Worthlessness of Things of the Flesh
Learn to hold the gospel in the highest esteem, so as not to let anything of the flesh take away its place of priority in the church.

The thing of greatest value in the church, the true treasure of the church, is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ, as preached according to the scriptures. Yet, though it is the true treasure of the church, the gospel is unappealing to the flesh. So, because the gospel is the true treasure of the church, but unappealing to the flesh, we must take care that nothing must be allowed to displace the preaching of the Word of God in Christ's church.

The preaching of the Word not to be cancelled in favor of something else

The preaching of the Word not to be shortened in favor of something else

The preaching of the Word not to be forgotten in favor of something else

Fifth week: The Priority of the **Cross**, Jesus Christ Crucified, As the Answer to All Religious Corruptions of Men.

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If the Church Would Simply Preach and Worship and Live According to the Word of Christ, All of These Doubts Could Be Resolved, Or Would Not Even Exist

Rather than being provided a false security of peace, Christians should be taught to be confident of entering heaven through a diligent following of Christ, their Head, through many tribulations and through death itself

Let the corruptions to which the devil would tempt us be remembered; and let the biblical truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ be our answer to them, for another 500 years if necessary, or another 5,000, however long it is until our Lord Jesus comes back. May He find us believing in His death for sinners on the cross when He returns.

Prelude: Grace 20 "Beneath the Cross"

Camille: Flute

Noah: Trumpet

Anna: Piano

Trinity 582 "The Solid Rock" - NOT THE TUNE FROM OUR HYMNAL

Camille: Piano - see attached in F

Noah: Trumpet - see attached in G

Anna: Clarinet - see attached in G

Grace 184 "We Have An All-Sufficient Word" - same tune as Trinity 26

Camille: piano

Noah: trumpet - see attached

Anna: clarinet - see attached

Trinity 91 "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"

Camille: Sing

Noah: Sing

Anna: Piano

Trinity 81 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Camille: Piano

Noah: Trumpet - see attached

Anna: Clarinet - see attached

81-89 When the Practices of Religious Leaders, Especially Their Financial Practices, Seem Unbiblical, the People of the Churches and the Public Will Have Legitimate Questions

82-83, 89 Religious leader, why does it seem that the things you do are not primarily for the spiritual good of souls, but for the financial good of your organization and yourself?

In Luther's time, Pope Leo X was selling indulgence to get money with which to make lavish improvements to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Religious leaders often work on the premise that the construction and maintenance of expensive buildings is the same as the work of the church. Yes, a building suitable for the church to meet in, whatever its size, is an obvious physical necessity.

In Luther's time, an impious, unreligious man could, by paying him money, influence the Pope to do something for the benefit of a friend or relative of his who was a pious, devout Christian. But if it were in the Pope's power to do that favor for that devout believer, why hadn't he already done it out of love, instead of waiting to be paid to do it?

85 Religious leader, why does it seem that you sometimes ignore your own traditions and documents, and other times dust them off and insist on them, according to whether or not they serve your present agenda?

In the case of the indulgence preachers in the time of Luther, it was the penitential canons.

86 Religious leader, why do you and your organization, with lots of money in the bank from previous donations, press your donors (even the poor) to give even more money to fund your latest project?

Luther heard the people asking, "Why doesn't the pope, whose wealth is vast, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than the money of poor believers?"

e.g. A man works and makes his money, taking in his profit from business or his salary or wages from his employer. He observes that the bible instructs him what to do

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper . . .

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? (14) Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Numbers 18:21 "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

Luther:

this extortion of money can not go on very long.

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What will be trouble be?

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It is not a state of happiness to see something wrong with a religious leader's actions, to ask the reasons for it, and then to be met only with force

Luther (on 82):

no one informs the people of the truth of the matter, and it frequently happens that when they are informed wrongly they yield to wrong ideas

Luther ("To this and similar questions"):

he [the pope] and the preachers of indulgences must be warned that the people should not be given such an open occasion to say, as the priest Eli once did, that because of his sons "the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt" (1 Samuel 2:17).

APPLICATION

Let us learn to ask such questions of religious leaders.

91 If the Church Would Simply Preach and Worship and Live According to the Word of Christ, All of These Doubts Could Be Resolved, Or Would Not Even Exist

92 Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace! (Jeremiah 6:14)

93 Blessed be all those preachers who say to the people, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!

If you are yourself a preacher, examine your preaching ministry in light of what Martin Luther here, as instructed by what Paul wrote. Is your preaching characterized by constant reference to Jesus Christ crucified for sinners?

94, 95 Rather than being provided a false security of peace, Christians should be taught to be confident of entering heaven through a diligent following of Christ, their Head, through many tribulations and through death itself

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Jeremiah 6:1-30

1 Samuel 2:12-17 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. (13) And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. (14) Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. (15) Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." (16) And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." (17) Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

Prelude: Grace 20 "Beneath the Cross"

Trinity 582 "The Solid Rock"

Grace 184 "We Have An All-Sufficient Word"

Trinity 91 "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"

Trinity 81 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

JRY: I grew up with VBS, taking an offering every day of VBS for something related to mission work. I remember that one time it was to buy bicycles for some missionaries somewhere who needed them. When I came to work as a pastor at one of the Baptist churches, I found they had made the VBS missions offering into a contest between the boys and girls. It did not occur to me that there was anything wrong with that. A scale had been built, that allowed two 5-gallon buckets to be hung, one on each side. The winner, whether the boys or girls, was determined by the weight of coins. I was in that system, and I did not see anything wrong with it. But one day someone described to me the thoughts of an unbelieving parent whose child was going to that VBS. Why is that church trying to squeeze money out of the children? Why is the church making giving an offering a contest between boys and girls? Why are the children told every day they need to bring more money for the offering, when they already brought some the day before? Why would anyone measure the value of an offering given by the weight of the coins?