

02 - Salvation from Men or from God - 2017-10-08

Call to Worship: John 5:24

Scripture Reading: Ezra 7:6-10; Nehemiah 8:1-8

Sermon: "95 Theses Part 2: Salvation from Men or from God" Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 10:28

Benediction: Romans 1:16-17

INTRODUCTION

As the 16th century dawned, the situation in the churches of Europe was grave. The people of the churches of Europe had not separated themselves from the superstitions of their pagan ancestors, but had, instead, incorporated those superstitions into the Christian religion. They conceived of salvation in the old pagan way: do enough of what the priests tell you is required by God, and you will have salvation; He will not punish you, but reward you. The priests, friars, monks, curates, and bishops did not teach and warn the people away from such superstitions regarding requirements made by men, but instead participated in it with them. The hand of their rulers, whether local burgermeisters or princes or even the Holy Roman Emperor, did not restrain them from such superstition, but was foremost in the trespass. The churches had, in effect, married themselves to the daughters of the Canaanites, mixing the pure Christian faith from the word of God with the man-made religion from the pagan idolators. Their system had come to be based on what men said was required for salvation.

In His mercy God raised up Martin Luther in those days as another Ezra. He came up from mystical Babylon, the Roman papal state, where, by God's great mercy, he had become skilled in the Word of God, the bible, which the Lord God of Israel had given us, but which had been horribly neglected in those days. His sovereign, Prince Frederick of Saxony, protected him, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. Some of God's children came up out of Babylon with him, believing the gospel as he preached and taught it, and working alongside him and supporting him: ministers, students, musicians, government officials, and many of the common people.

This Ezra began his journey from Babylon and came to God's true church, spiritual Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him, for by the work of the Holy Spirit in him, Luther had prepared his heart to seek the Gospel of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ in His church.

The people flocked to Luther to him preach the gospel, and read the bible to them. His students published his 95 Theses, and his books, and his sermons. Eventually he was able to translate the bible into German and have it published. The people of Europe gathered as one man to hear and to read the Word of God, as taught by Martin Luther and his students. Luther proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ to the men, to the women, to all who could hear with understanding. By God's grace, the ears of the people were attentive to the Bible. Luther praised God in the people's own language, and the people said, "Amen!" They bowed their heads and worshiped

the LORD in their own language. At Luther's right hand stood Melancthon, Bullinger, Gualter, Calvin, Zwingli, Hooper, Martyr, Bucer, Knox, and many others, who helped the people to understand the Law of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These men read distinctly from the bible; and they explained the sense of it; and helped the people to understand the reading.

Thus God, full of mercy, poured out His grace on the people of Europe in the 1500s, bringing in a great reformation and revival.

Of all the literature produced during the great reformation, by which we came again to understand the gospel, the document that seems to have sparked all of that holy fire, Martin Luther's 95 Theses of October 31, 1517, seems at once the most famous and the least understood. That common people read it at all was surprising to Luther. But that we have trouble understanding it, would have been no surprise to Martin Luther, the author. Hear what he said a few months later, about the 95 Theses:

It was made public at our University and for our University only, and it was made public in such wise that I cannot believe it has become known to all men. For it is a set of theses, not doctrines or dogmas, and they are put, according to custom, in an obscure and enigmatic way. Otherwise, if I had been able to foresee what was coming, I should have taken care, for my part, that they would be easier to understand.

It is, indeed, an academic document, requiring some level of scholarship to understand. I have taken some education, and am not entirely new to reading things written for the scholar, but still it has taken me some weeks of mental exercise to understand some of this. As I understand more and more, however, the beauty of Luther's defense of the true gospel of Jesus Christ and his care for the sinners who need that gospel become more and more evident. In fact, I am now delighting in Luther's 95 Theses, which I would never have thought of before.

Today I bring you a message from the bible, the word of God, incorporating 11 of the 95 theses, 11, 20, 21, 24, 32, 35, 36, 37, 75, 76, and 80 organized in four main headings. The main theme is this:

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 not from men, but from God.

TEXT

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

BODY

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 not from men, but from God.

- I. Man-Made Requirements for Salvation Produce Only Man-Made Salvation OR When a Man Preaches His Own Requirements for Salvation, He Necessarily Preaches Only Whatever Salvation He Himself Can Provide 20, 21, 75, 76
 - A. If a man preaches what *God* requires for salvation (namely, repentance and faith), the salvation experienced by his hearer who meets those requirements is the salvation provided by God who made the requirements
 1. it is worth stating here that God not only makes the requirements, but also works in the sinner by His Spirit to grant the fulfilling of those same requirements; repentance and faith are wrought in the heart of the sinner by the Holy Spirit
 - B. But if a man instead preaches what *man* requires for salvation, the salvation that the hearer experiences will be only the salvation that man can provide
 - C. The pope was doing this in 1517
 1. required putting money in the box to buy a papal indulgence
 - a) not required by God
 - b) required by the pope
 2. promised salvation from God
 - a) forgiveness of all sins
 - b) freedom from all punishment
 - c) rewards in heaven
 3. but cannot actually deliver salvation from God, but only from himself
 - a) forgiveness of all sins in his own eyes
 - b) freedom from all punishment by him
 - c) whatever rewards he can give and is willing to give
 - D. Today's preacher does this in 2017
 1. he requires things not required by God, but required by himself
 - a) stop smoking and drinking
 - b) go to church
 - c) put money in the offering
 - d) OT ceremonies now expired in th NT
 - e) NT ordinances preached as necessary for salvation
 - f) moral law
 - g) man-made church things
 - (1) raise hand, stand up
 - (2) walk down front
 - (3) repeat this prayer after me

- (4) ask Jesus into your heart
- (5) make Jesus your lord
- (6) get a relationship with God
- (7) make a decision
- (8) make a commitment
- h) verses lifted out of context and made requirements for salvation
- 2. he promises salvation from God
 - a) forgiveness of all sins
 - b) freedom from all punishment
 - c) rewards in heaven
- 3. but he cannot actually deliver salvation from God, but only from himself
 - a) forgiveness of all sins in his own eyes
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When a Man Preaches His Own Requirements for Salvation, He Necessarily Preaches Only Whatever Salvation He Himself Can Provide

II. People Are Deceived By Such a High-Sounding Promise of Salvation By What Man Requires 24, 32

- A. In 1517 in Saxony, the people were very easily deceived
 - 1. they didn't have the bible, except in Latin, which they typically did not know
 - 2. the preists in the churches typically did not know the bible, either, and anyway did not teach the truth of it to the people
 - 3. it was very easy for the pope, by the indulgence preachers like Johann Tetzel, to deceive the people by high-sounding promises of salvation from all guilt and punishment for all who would buy letters of papal indulgence
- B. In 2017 people in this culture should not be quite so easily deceived, and perhaps they are not deceived quite as easily
 - 1. but the devil is not an ammateur at deceiving people; he has made a career of it, and is very skilled and successful at it
 - 2. Luther's observation still rings true, that people are deceived by high-sounding promises of salvation by what man requires
- C. The sinner
 - 1. knows by nature that there is a god to whom he must answer, even if the world tries to suppress that truth in unrighteousness
 - 2. has the law of God in his heart by creation, and his conscience sometimes excuses him, but other times accuses him
 - 3. may even be so blessed as to know the law of God as given in the bible
 - a) in Ten Commandments
 - b) in Two Commandments regarding love for God and your neighbor
 - 4. wants to be saved from the wrath of God rather than suffering it

- a) has a slavish fear of punishment
 - b) has a carnal, worldly sorrow for the wrong he's done
 - 5. is still in his natural state of sin; unregenerate; not born again
 - a) not contrite in heart, not having a godly sorrow leading to repentance
 - b) eyes still blind, not open
 - c) if he hears the actual gospel of Jesus Christ he considers it foolishness
- D. The preacher, preaching salvation by what man requires
 - 1. confirms the sinner's
 - a) guilt deserving of punishment
 - b) desire for salvation
 - 2. preaches man-made requirements for salvation
 - 3. makes high-sounding promises regarding salvation
- E. The sinner
 - 1. is deceived by the high-sounding promise of salvation
 - 2. understands the man-made requirements, since he is carnal and they are carnal
 - 3. fulfills the man-made requirements; he does what the preacher tells him he must do
- F. The preacher
 - 1. assures the sinner he is saved
 - 2. tells the church the sinner is saved
- G. The church
 - 1. receives the sinner as a member
 - 2. puts water on the sinner and calls it baptism
 - 3. presents the sinner to the world as what a Christian is
 - 4. involves the sinner in making decisions for the church
- H. The sinner is deceived
 - 1. he thinks his guilt is forgiven, but actually he remains in the guilt of his sins
 - 2. he thinks he is on the road to glory, but actually continues on the path toward eternal damnation

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People Are Deceived By Such a High-Sounding Promise of Salvation By What Man Requires

III. Those Who Preach Salvation By What Man Requires Are Not Preaching Christian Doctrine 11, 32, 35, 80

- A. We understand that individual preachers, other Christians, and whole churches or groups of churches have differences of opinion on various things in the bible
- B. But sometimes preachers, or whole church groups, come to preach doctrines that are so devoid of basic Christian truth, so much made of mere human requirements, that they amount to something not even Christian
- C. In the time of Martin Luther: contrition not necessary, just paying the money
 - 1. definition of contrition: Godly sorrow
 - 2. importance of contrition: necessary component of repentance
- D. In our time
 - 1. contrition not necessary; repentance not necessary, just saying the prayer
 - a) preached this way to produce “converts”
 - b) believed this way by ignorant loved ones
 - 2. knowledge of the gospel not necessary, just serving God according to natural revelation
- E. As mentioned earlier, such converts who truly believe that fulfilling man’s requirements is what saves him will not be saved, but damned
- F. Also their teachers, if they truly believe this, will be damned with them
- G. Pastors who permit such talk to spread among the people will have to answer for it
 - 1. James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

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People Are Deceived By Such a High-Sounding Promise of Salvation By What Man Requires

Those Who Preach Salvation By What Man Requires Are Not Preaching Christian Doctrine

IV. Any Truly Repentant Sinner, Trusting in Jesus Christ for Salvation, Has All the Blessings of Christ, Without Regard to Man-Made Requirements 36, 37

- A. what is actually required by God
 - 1. is repentance from sin and
 - 2. faith in Jesus Christ
 - 3. again, worth repeating that the very things He requires for salvation He also works in the sinner by His Spirit
- B. What the Christian has in Jesus Christ
 - 1. he has forgiveness in the sight of God - full remission of both
 - a) guilt, and
 - b) penalties

2. he has rewards from God - a place in Christ's church, with a share of all its inheritance
 - a) Peter preaching at Pentecost
 - (1) Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit.**
 - b) Beattitudes in the Sermon on the Mount
 - (1) the kingdom of heaven
 - (2) comfort from our mourning
 - (3) the earth
 - (4) fullness of righteousness
 - (5) seeing God
 - (6) being called the sons of God
 - c) Revelation 21
 - (1) a place in the new heaven and new earth (v. 1)
 - (2) a share in being the bride of Christ (v. 2)
 - (3) a dwelling place with God (v. 3)
 - (4) a wiping away of every tear by God Himself (v. 4)
 - (5) freedom from death, sorrow, crying, and pain (v. 4)
 - (6) the fountain of the water of life---meaning everlasting life (v. 6)
- C. He has these things by grant from God
1. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
 2. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CONCLUSION

It has been 500 years now since these things were written down for us, to turn us away from obeying the mere commandments of men, believing that in it we would have salvation; to turn us to the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whom there is forgiveness of sins and reward in heaven. Do not fall back into the old error. Recognize it for what it is, and heed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners. All your sins will be forgiven you, and you will have eternal life with the Lord in glory.

When a Man Preaches His Own Requirements for Salvation, He Necessarily Preaches Only Whatever Salvation He Himself Can Provide

People Are Deceived By Such a High-Sounding Promise of Salvation By What Man Requires

Those Who Preach Salvation By What Man Requires Are Not Preaching Christian Doctrine

Any Truly Repentant Sinner, Trusting in Jesus Christ for Salvation, Has All the Blessings of Christ, Without Regard to Man-Made Requirements

So, then, 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 not from men, but from God.

Prelude: Trinity 166 "From Heaven High I Come to You"

Camille: piano

Noah: trumpet

Anna: clarinet

Trinity 155 "All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord"

Camille: piano

Noah: trumpet - see attached

Anna: clarinet - see attached

Trinity 174 "Praise the Saviour Now and Ever"

Camille: piano

Noah: trumpet

Anna: sing

Grace 132 "The Power of the Cross"

Camille: sing

Noah: sing

Anna: piano

Trinity 212 "A Hymn of Glory" (remember we played this for the prelude in August, then used the tune for a different hymn)

Camille: piano - transpose down two half steps

Noah: trumpet - play from hymnal

Anna: clarinet - play from hymnal

11, 32, 35, 80 Those who teach that repentance and faith are not necessary for salvation are not preaching Christian doctrine, but creating some kind of cult

80 Pastors and other theologians who permit such talk to spread among the people will have to answer for this.

Knollys on Revelation 14:8

mystical Babylon, that great city, the whole Roman papal state

20 Therefore the pope, when he uses the words "plenary remission of all penalties," does not actually mean "all penalties," but only those imposed by himself.

JRY: You can, by men, be considered not to be a Christian, then do something that, according to men, makes you a Christian, but that means you are then a Christian only according to men.

75 To consider papal indulgences so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God is madness.

JRY: To say that the guilt of even the greatest sin against God is absolved when you do what man requires in religion is madness.

21 Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

76 We say on the contrary that papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins as far as guilt is concerned.

24 For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.

32 Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

35 They who teach that contrition is not necessary on the part of those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessional privileges preach unchristian doctrine.

80 The bishops, curates, and theologians who permit such talk to be spread among the people will have to answer for this.

36 Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.

37 Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.

It was made public at our University and for our University only, and it was made public in such wise that I cannot believe it has become known to all men. For it is a set of theses, not doctrines or dogmas, and they are put, according to custom, in an obscure and enigmatic way. Otherwise, if I had been able to foresee what was coming, I should have taken care, for my part, that they would be easier to understand.

