

INTRODUCTION

1. For the last two weeks we have talked about the heart of the reformation.
2. We saw what drove Martin Luther which was the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. And we saw how a person receives the righteousness of God.
4. Both of these elements were at the heart of the protestant Reformation.
5. Today I want to talk about another reformation that needs to take place.
6. And that is in the church itself.
7. The greatest threat to the church today is the church.
8. Why?
9. Because the church has abandoned her essential priorities.
10. She has left her first love.
11. As we celebrate our 69th year as a church, I want to ask you “Are you a threat to the church?”
12. Have you bought into the lie of the culture and have become one with it?
13. Paul said in Romans 12:1-2 (NASB) Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a

living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

14. Does this describe your life?
15. Does this describe this church?
16. Are we offering our lives as living sacrifices and not being molded into the image of the world?
17. There are 5 essential priorities that must constantly be brought at the forefront of the church or we will be no different than the world.
18. The first is...

I. A High View of God

Our thoughts must constantly be elevated to a lofty view of God because:

A. God Must Be Glorified In All That We Do

1. In the little things of our life as well as the big

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB) ³¹ Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

2. In everything we do

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB) ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

In order for us to glorify God in the little things as well as the big or in everything we do, we must perceive ourselves as “an institution for the glory of God” (MacArthur).

That means...

B. God Must Be Taken Seriously

1. There must be a fear of the Lord in our attitude

a) **Proverbs 8:13 (NASB)** ¹³ "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

b) **Proverbs 16:6 (NASB)** ⁶ By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.

2. We need to see God as He is revealed in His Word

In order to do that...

a) We must think biblically

Romans 12:2 (NASB) ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

b) We must talk biblically

Colossians 4:6 (NASB) ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

c) We must act biblically

Ephesians 5:18 (NASB) ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Thomas Watson writes: “The Spirit stamps the impression of his own sanctity upon the heart, as the seal prints its likeness upon the wax. The Spirit of God in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven.”

Joel Beeke says, “That believers are called to holiness is indisputably clear. But the cardinal question remains: How does the believer cultivate holiness?”

First he is to “*know and love Scripture*. This is God’s primary road to holiness and to spiritual growth—the Spirit as Master Teacher blessing the reading and searching of God’s Word.”

If you are going to think, talk, and act biblically then you must cultivate holiness in your life.

We will say more about this later.

The second principle that must be at our foundation as a church is...

II. The Absolute Authority of Scripture

A. God’s Word is Being Undermined Today

1. By what is being taught in churches
2. By what is being added to it (visions, revelations, etc.)

Proverbs 30:5-6 (NASB) ⁵Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. ⁶Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Sure there are cults that do this but what is frightening is the evangelical church is following suite.

3. By our behavior (disobedience)

To be an institution for the glory of God and one that continually surrenders to the absolute authority of Scripture...

B. God's Word Must Be Upheld

1. It must be our highest priority

- a) Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4 (NASB)** ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' "

Do you live your life on "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God?"

- b) Do you have the commitment to Scripture that Job had when he said in **Job 23:12 (NASB)** ¹² "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

God's Word must be upheld, it must be surrendered to, it must be our highest priority. Why? Because...

2. It is of great profit in your life

Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)**
¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

God's Word is "profitable" to make "the man of God...adequate" and "equipped for every good work."

So for the Word to do its work it has to be taught, used when reproving, correcting, and instructing in righteousness.

God's Word is the greatest necessity of your life because...

3. It is necessary for spiritual growth

Peter said it this way in **1 Peter 2:2 (NASB)** ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

Joseph Alleine said, "O ye saints, how you should love the Word, for by this you have been converted.... Tie it about your neck, write it upon your hand, lay it in your bosom. When you go let it lead you, when you sleep let it keep you, when you wake let it talk with you. (Prov. 6:21-22). You that are unconverted, read the Word with diligence; flock to where it is powerfully preached. Pray for the coming of the Spirit in the

Word. Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees.”¹

As you can clearly see, what lies at our foundation is not only what has been taught and modeled before you but what you are cultivating in your life.

The third principle that must be at the heart of our foundation as a church is...

III. Sound Doctrine

“If you have a high view of God and are committed to Him, then you must go along with what His Word teaches” (MacArthur).

Paul told Titus in Titus 2:1 to speak the things that are proper for sound doctrine.

“Sound” is *hugiaino*, “healthy.”
“Doctrine” is *didaskalia*, “teaching.”

To have “healthy teaching” in our church...

A. We Must Teach Truths that People Can Hold On To

“Very few people explain the truths about God, life, death, heaven, hell, man, sin, Christ, angels, the Holy

¹I.D.E. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, electronic ed. (Simpsonville SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996).

Spirit, the position of the believer, the flesh, or the world” (MacArthur).

But we have sought to speak of those things here because the Bible talks about these issues and because...

1. We are to speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine

Titus 2:1 (NASB) ¹ But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

2. We are to hold fast the pattern of sound words

2 Timothy 1:13 (NASB) ¹³ Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

If we are going to speak and hold fast to these truth then...

3. We are to declare the whole counsel of God

When Paul was speaking to the elders at Ephesus, he told them in **Acts 20:27 (NASB)** ²⁷ "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

If we then are to be committed to sound doctrine then...

- B. We Must Commit Ourselves to Go Beyond the Superficial in Our Study of God’s Word

1. We must be diligent when we present ourselves to God

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB) ¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2. We must give constant attention to the exposition of God's Word

In other words, we must always be concerned with what it means by what it says!

Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:13 (NASB)** ¹³ Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

The words "give attention" (*prosecho*) means "to pay attention to, give heed to, or follow" (BAGD).

The "reading" (*anagnosis*) refers to "the public reading of the Scriptures" (*Zodhiates*).

"Exhortation" (*paraklesis*) "refers to the act of exhortation. " It is "encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in faith" (*Zodhiates*).

"Teaching" (*didaskalia*) or as the AV puts it "doctrine" is simply that.

A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, and sound doctrine—this must be at the heart of all we do.

If you want to understand why we do some of the things we do the way we do it, it is because of the foundation we are laying in your life.

When you have a high view of God and are committed to the absolute authority of Scripture and are taught sound doctrine, you will then be committed to this fourth foundational principle...

IV. Personal Holiness

A. We Are Called to Live a Pure Life

God has established this standard in our life because it is His nature.

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NASB) ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1. Peter says that the basis for his exhortation to holiness is because God Himself is holy and we are to be like God.

Ephesians 5:1 (NASB) ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

2. God has called us to holiness – it is His will for our lives

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 (NASB) ¹ Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. ² For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. ⁷ For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

With this in mind then...

- B. We Need to Be Careful What We Expose Ourselves To

“It’s impossible to watch some of the films in the theaters and to read trash without paying a price” (MacArthur).

1. 2 Corinthians 7:1 says we are to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh

You cannot do that if you are exposing yourself to the filthiness of the flesh.

2. 1 John 3:3 says we are to be pure as He is pure - And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If we are called to live a pure life and therefore need to be careful to what we expose ourselves to...

C. We Must Enforce a Standard of Holiness Among Ourselves

How do you do this?

1. Don't let sin be named among you

Ephesians 5:3-4 (NASB) ³ But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴ and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

2. Kill sin in your life

Colossians 3:5 (NASB) ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

3. Confront sin in others

Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB) ¹⁵ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he

listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed . ¹⁷ "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Don't get mad or become bitter if someone sins against you. Go to them privately and restore them.

A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, sound doctrine, and personal holiness. Notice the last principle that should be at the foundation of Christ's church...

V. **Spiritual Authority**

This is a huge problem today in the church. We don't understand how God has structured His church. But if we're going to function for His glory and bring honor to His Word, then we must understand that...

A. **Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and He Mediates His Rule Through Godly Men Called Elders**

1. **Jesus is the head of the church**

Colossians 1:18 (NASB) ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

2. He rules His church through godly men called elders

Hebrews 13:17 (NASB) ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

This is the spiritual authority that God has placed in the church

But understand that their authority rests only in God's Word.

They are not to micromanage your life.

They are to hold you accountable to holiness but ultimately they cannot make you be holy. That's is God's work.

B. This is God's Design for the Church to Function Properly

1. Christ is the head of the church.
2. He mediates His rule through godly men called elders.
3. Deacons come alongside and implement what the elders teach.
4. The congregation submits.

CONCLUSION

1. What conclusions do you come to when you evaluate us as a church?
2. Do you have a high view of God?
3. Do you submit to the absolute authority of Scripture?
4. Are you feeding on sound doctrine?
5. Are you giving attention to personal holiness?
6. Are you recognizing and submitting to the spiritual authority in your life?
7. If you are to go forth as a church you must examine where you are and take the next step to becoming what God wants you to be.
8. But before you can do that you must make sure that you are in the family of God.
9. Have you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?
10. If you haven't, will you come to Him now?
11. Let's pray.