

October 27, 2024

Romans 3:19-28:

We Must Stand!

- I. Because We Have A Mission.
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Romans 3:19-28

Dear Friends in Christ,

On April 15, 1521, Martin Luther stood before the Holy Emperor of Rome, and many others, at the Diet of Worms, Germany. A Diet was a one day legislative meeting of estates or representatives. Luther stated:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, or by patent, clear, and cogent reasons and arguments (for I believe neither Pope nor the councils alone, since it is evident that they often erred and contradicted themselves) and because passages adduced and quoted by me have convinced and bound my conscience in God's Word, therefore I cannot and will not recant, since it is neither safe nor advisable to do anything against conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise! God help me! Amen.

I am not applying the following to this beloved Pilgrim congregation, but eight years after the Diet of Worms, in the preface to his Large Catechism, Luther wrote:

...besides, a shameful and insidious plague of security and boredom has overtaken us. Many regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once they toss the book into a corner...Indeed, even among the nobility there are some louts (clumsy, awkward oafs) and skinflints (tightwads) who declare they can do without pastors and preachers from now on because we have everything in books and can learn it all by ourselves...(The Book of Concord. *Luther's Large Catechism*, Theodore G. Tappert, Fortress Press p.359).

Luther's statement is descriptive of much, if not most, of the church today. You see . . .

WE MUST STAND

I. Because We Have A Mission

Do we truly embrace this: We Must Stand? We must because we have been given a mission, a reason for being here, as Jesus commanded: "...make disciples...(by) baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you (Mt.28:19,20)."
Observe all - not just selected pieces of what He commanded, only what people want to hear.

The Great Commission has been cut and scarred by the whining and wants of dying flesh. For all its efforts to win the masses with this world's song and dance, the efforts of the "modern church" have torn out the heart of the Gospel! And, still, everyone will die. Each will die alone. And each will enter into...what? "Whoever believes will have eternal life" has been replaced with "Believe whatever makes you feel good about yourself." Because of this *we must stand*.

The Reformation is not past tense. When Martin Luther held his ground for the truth of Holy Scripture and cried out, "Here I stand, I can do no other," we must stand on the same ground. God said through the prophet Jeremiah:

"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord (Jer.9:23,24)."

Martin Luther wrote:

See the great prosperity of the wicked, and by contrast the great adversity of the good...yet all this, which looks so much like injustice in God...is most easily cleared up by the light of the Gospel and the knowledge of grace...in a single little word: There is life after life; and all that is not punished and repaid here will be punished and repaid there...(Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will, translated by J.I. Packer and O.R. Johnston, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957, p.57).

It's what most try to avoid. It's the last breath of the atheist's cry of unbelief; "There is no God!" It's the delusion of the self righteous; "I've been a good person, God owes me." It's the neglected reality of the world lover: death. Each will die and enter into....what? Together, they are where the world stands. Well, We Must Stand: "The Gospel (nothing else and certainly not mans' innovations) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...(Rm.1:16)."

II. It's Still The Same.

The Confessions that were formed at the time of the Reformation era are as meaningful today. It's been stated before and is deserving of the repetition: We are a Reformation church. *The Augsburg Confession* of the Lutheran Church, which was formulated and presented in August of 1530, is the cornerstone of our confession, as it states:

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God (**that is, we become right and acceptable**) when we **believe** that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon (count) this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 4:5. (Tappert, The Book of Concord, The Augsburg Confession, Article IV, [Justification], p.30:1-3).

With this Confession in front of us, we also believe, teach, and confess that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired, errant, and authoritative Word of God. They are not subject to change with the times, and, as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction and training in righteousness." This is locked into Jesus statement: "Scripture cannot be broken (Jn.10:34b)."

For the church to be the church, it must always stand with the truth and totality of what Scriptures teach from the moment God said to Adam: "...but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gn.2:17)." Dying, death and damnation are the consequences of sin, as spelled out in our text:

"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ for all who believe...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

"For we hold that one is justified (forgiven and pronounced 'not guilty') by faith apart from works of the law (Rm.3:19-24,28)."

Jesus was very clear when He said, "I told you that you would die in your sin, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins (Jn.8:24)." That's it! Without Jesus we're left with

nothing but this world's unceasing march with delusion, perversion, murder and lies. Dying and death are not normal. They are the consequences of sin; lawlessness against God. Without Christ, they are the entrance into eternal, burning darkness. There is no love in hell.

For years, I have held on to this observation that was made by Professor Ronald Wallace who was Professor of Biblical Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary. He died in 2006:

The church's future today depends, not on being able to assume a mighty and popular form of dignity, impressiveness and stability before men, but simply for being able to utter to the world the same life-giving word Jesus uttered from the cross.

III. Where Do You Stand?

Once again, Martin Luther said, "...in a single little word: *There is life after life; and all that is not punished and repaid here will be punished and repaid there...*". Based on Scripture, Luther was absolutely correct. Keep in mind that Adam and Eve entered dying and death and eternal separation from God because they ate a piece of fruit; disobeyed just one command from God. But God intervened. Covered them. Luther wrote:

Grace consists in this: that God is merciful to us, shows himself gracious for the sake of the Lord Christ, forgives all sins, and will not impute them to us for eternal death. That is grace: the forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Lord Christ, the covering-up of all sins.

We hold to the clear and eternal Word of God:

...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (all!). If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (I Jn. 1:7b-10).

We must move beyond the question of "Where do you stand?" God give this congregation the continued strength to declare, *We Must Stand, We Can Do No Other!*

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott