

What Was the Mission or Purpose of the Reformation?

2 Tim 4:1-5 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

How important is it to have a church of the Reformation in today's world? Or maybe it would be of greater wisdom to ask, what does it mean to be a church of the Reformation? The reason I think that to be a more important question is because I really think that the answer to that question is that it means to be a church of the Bible; that is, a church of sound biblical truth. And how important is that in this day and time?

Especially when we live in a day and age in which a system of values seems to be an outdated commodity. Truth itself is considered to be something that is above one's ability to appreciate or even attain. I really believe that one can say that in the society in which we live truth has no value whatsoever. Truth has become something that is not only outdated - - it has become unnecessary in our lives and beyond ones reach at that. Of what value is truth in a day when, in the minds of most people, neither right nor wrong, true or untrue even exists? When, really the only important thing is me.

But before you begin to feel that maybe a church of biblical truth has become outdated and unneeded, permit me to remind you of Pilate's response to Jesus when he asked our Lord, "What is truth"? You see the ability to know the truth has been suspect in all ages. Indeed there has always been skepticism and cynicism regarding one's capability of knowing truth. I point this out lest you become discouraged and think that such cynicism is new to our age alone. Such questions regarding the very existence of truth have been around in every age every since Satan asked Eve, "Has God indeed said . . . ?"

Now I really do not think that I needed to ask you as members of this church, here this morning, "How important is a church of the Reformation in this day", or "How important is a biblically sound church in this day". I say that because I really believe that every one of you would respond with one voice and say, "It is of absolute importance". I am confident of that . . . because I do not think that you would even be here this morning or be a part of this church if you did not think that a Biblically sound church is of utmost importance.

But permit me to be a little bold with you this morning, because I think it may be far more important for me to ask you who are members of the church this question, "How important is the church to you personally?" That is, what do you think the purpose for the existence of the church is? But even that question is too far removed from the question that I really want to ask you this morning as your pastor. May I be permitted to make it even more personal, what is the purpose of **this church**? Why do you gather here each Lord's day to serve God? How important is this church to you?

When we get right down to it, the real question before us this morning is, "How important was the church to God? Paul gives us the answer when he wrote that "*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her*". (Eph 5:25) In other words the church is not merely a man made society. It is a body of a people that God purchased with His own blood. I think now we can better understand the solemnity of Paul's charge to Timothy which I believe continues to be a charge to us through the written word.

A. The solemn charge of God to His church - *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!*

1. This Greek word that is translated "charge" here implies that the subject matter is of great importance.
 - a. Paul does not say - I think it would be a good idea - or kind of nice if . . .
 - b. Rather Paul chose a word that implies an important obligation to the church.
2. Here, it has the intent of calling God and Jesus Christ to be a witness to the seriousness of the command. - *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom*

- a. Paul wanted Timothy to be aware that he will have to answer before Almighty God as to the **content** of His preaching.
 - b. The church is to proclaim truths that is not merely of some passing importance but of an importance that carries with it things of eternal value.
 - c. For I believe that it should place a heavy burden upon you to be faithful in prayers, support and faithfulness to God's church.
3. It is a charge to the church in season or out of season, timely or untimely, desired or undesired.
- a. Paul points out that we can expect that men will not desire sound doctrine.
 - b. That even in the church, they will desire men in leadership who turn away from the truth.
 - c. Men who will simply tickle the ears of the congregation
 - d. Need not think it strange that sound doctrine is not popular today.
 - e. It has not been popular in the church for the last 2000 years, for the last 6000 years.

B. What then must be the message of the church today?

- 1. The message of the church must be one that proclaims that this is our Father's world.
 - a. There is no such thing as a "secular" world and "spiritual" world.
 - b. Everything we do is to be to the glory of God - in your daily tasks
- 2. It must be a message that lets men know that the effect of the fall is much worse than they think.
 - a. Men need to be made to understand that there is nothing good in them.
 - b. Men need to be told of the seriousness of sin.
 - (1) Sin brought death.
 - (2) Sin is not merely what you do - who you are
 - (3) You cannot make yourself better or worthy of God, you can only acknowledge your sinfulness, turn to God in repentance, and place your trust in Christ alone.
 - c. A biblical church must emphasize the fact that "God became flesh and lived among us".
 - (1) The story of Jacob's ladder does not teach us how to ascend to God, rather it speaks of how God descended to us
 - (2) God took our flesh, our sin, and our punishment paid the price in our place,
 - (3) A church of the Bible tells the sinners that God alone has provided a real and living hope
 - d. Men need to be told that this same Jesus rose from the dead, ascended on high and rules over the nations of men and is coming again as Judge of all mankind.
 - (1) This present world has nothing to offer but death.
 - (2) That they will stand before God and will be cast into an eternal hell unless they repent and place their trust in Christ alone.
 - e. But they do need to hear that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost.

CONCLUSION: I trust that you are aware that I have not simply asked:

What is the church? Or what is a church of the Bible?

But really I hope you have been asking yourself what is my responsibility to help make this kind of a church a reality here in N W Arkansas?

What can I do to make this a faithful church?

When I stand before God on that great day, can I say, I did my best to provide a faithful church where the Word of God was truly proclaimed.

You see, the question is not - do we need such a church?

Rather, the real question is really twofold;

First, how can we best accomplish this and secondly, what is my responsibility before God in this ministry?

There is no question that a church of the Reformation is needed in this day