



**From 1517 to 2017, 500 years.
Some call it an anniversary. Others say it should be a
memorial, since we shouldn't celebrate sin.**

TR: Many of us really don't understand . . .

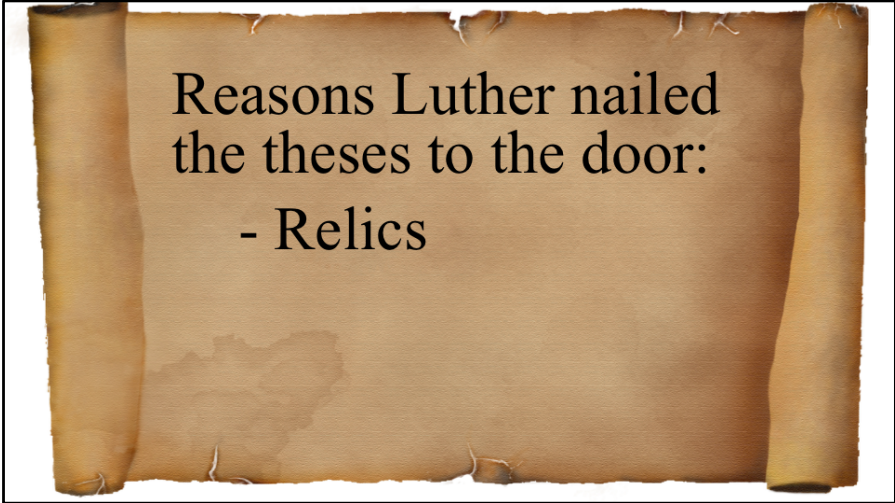


. . . why a Catholic monk named Luther, with his doctorate in theology, would nail 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg.

-- It wasn't an act of graffiti, that's were notices would be posted.

-- It wasn't a call to arms, they were written in Latin so that the learned could debate them, while the regular folks would have been left in the dark.

TR: When you read through a translation of the theses, it seems clear that the two biggest reasons Luther nailed them to the door were the abuses of . . .



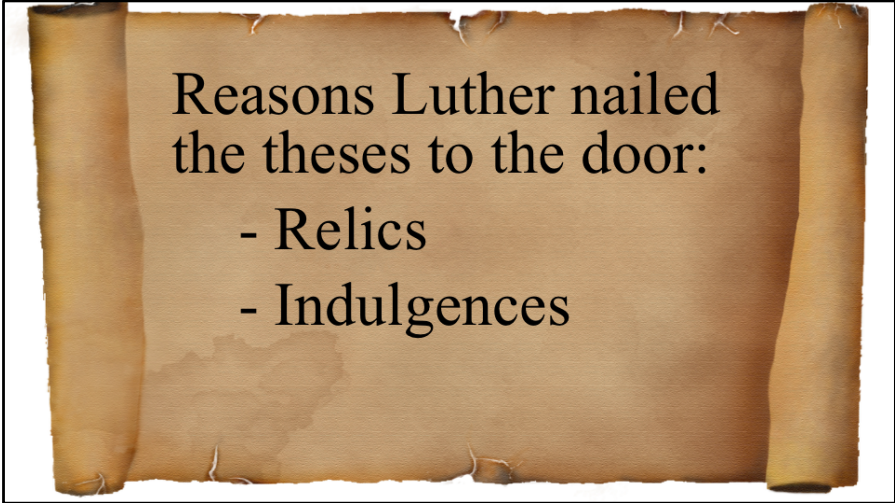
Reasons Luther nailed
the theses to the door:
- Relics

. . . relics.

-- Leaders of the church and state believed that there was power in the relics of saints who had died, such as their bones, or in slivers of wood from the cross.

-- In a sense, the man of the street came to believe that if they could only touch or be near one of these relics that spiritual “power” would be theirs.

TR: But the reason that seemed to push Luther over the edge was . . .



Reasons Luther nailed
the theses to the door:

- Relics
- Indulgences

. . . how the church was teaching and practicing the use of indulgences.

-- These were grants by the Pope, through the leadership of the church, for the remission of punishment in purgatory through the merits of Christ and the saints.

-- In a sense, the saints had “extra” grace to share with other believers.

TR: The abuse of this idea was most profound by people like . .

.



Johann Tetzel, the Grand Commissioner for indulgences in Germany.

-- “When into the coffer a coin rings, up from purgatory a soul springs.”

TR: Preachers like him would ride into town and in a sense “sell” indulgences. One might call it a donation but the average person expected an exchange of “goods.”

“The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

All who die in God’s grace, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven (1030).”

www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-purgatory-in-the-bible

It is all based on the idea of purgatory. As the Catholic Church still teaches . . . READ SLIDE

- The word is derived from the Latin for “purifying.”**
- It was not a second chance to believe but rather a time for believers to be purified.**
- Receiving indulgences, on behalf of those who have died and are most likely in purgatory, would help shorten their time before they were admitted into heaven.**

TR: This is further rooted in the Catholic understanding of justification, that is, how a person is declared right with God.

JUSTIFICATION = DECLARED RIGHT
WITH GOD

F_{AITH} + **W**_{ORKS} → **J**_{USTIFICATION}

F_{AITH} → **J**_{USTIFICATION} + **W**_{ORKS}

As I've shared with you before, a couple of simple formulas capture the thinking.

-- If $F+W \rightarrow J$, then the merit of works must be sufficient, either from our works in this life OR from the additional purification of works in purgatory.

-- BUT, if $F \rightarrow J+W$, then our declaration of being right with God is based only on the work of Christ.

-- Luther struggled for many years wondering if he was good enough, if he had faith enough.

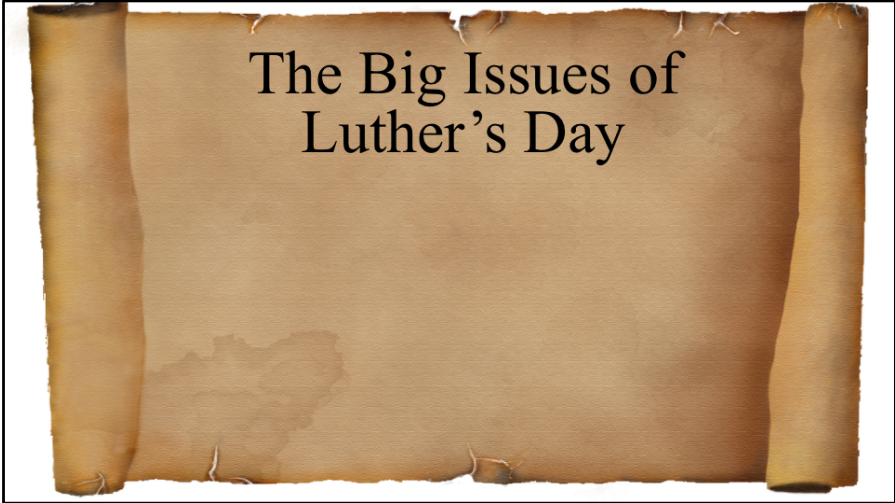
-- The fearful doubt, that the church seemed to encourage, led to the abuse of indulgences.

TR: In overly simplistic Monopoly terms . . .



. . . they were “Get out of purgatory” cards.
-- While you couldn’t buy indulgences for sins not yet committed, there were common stories of people actually figuring out how much a certain sin would cost them and then deciding they “could afford it.”

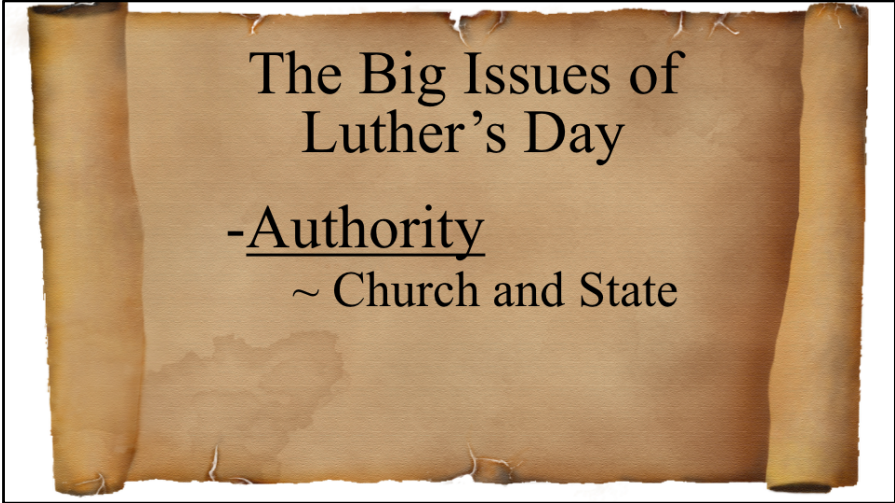
TR: As we try to understand what the big deal is about this 500 year QUINCENTENNIAL . . .



The Big Issues of
Luther's Day

**. . . it may help to consider what the big issues of the day were.
-- In a sense, these were the parchment on which the abuses of
relics and indulgences were written.**

TR: Reading history, one can't miss that the issue of . . .



The Big Issues of
Luther's Day

-Authority
~ Church and State

. . . authority was huge.

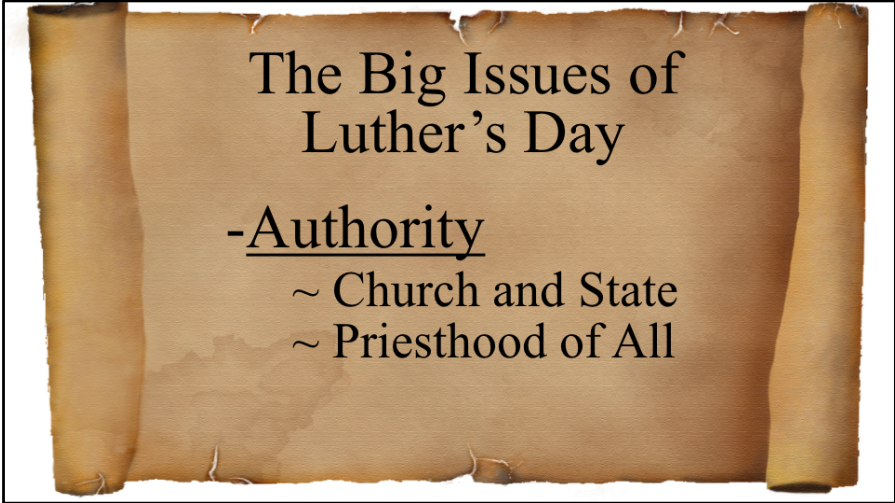
-- Specifically, the roles of the church and state.

-- As the Holy Roman Empire was breaking apart, who had authority for what?

-- At times there had been two and even three Popes, who had the authority and the keys to the kingdom of God?

-- Did councils have authority over Popes or Popes over councils?

TR: Related to this issue of authority was one that hit closer to home for the average person . . .



The Big Issues of
Luther's Day

-Authority

- ~ Church and State
- ~ Priesthood of All

. . . that is, the authority of the priesthood . . .
-- was it limited to only certain ordained folks or did the Bible teach the priesthood of all believers.
-- If partaking of Mass as a sacrament was essential to being right with God AND only the priests could administer the transformation of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, then the priests had a lot of spiritual authority, didn't they.

TR: Are all believers truly priests, like Peter teaches . . .

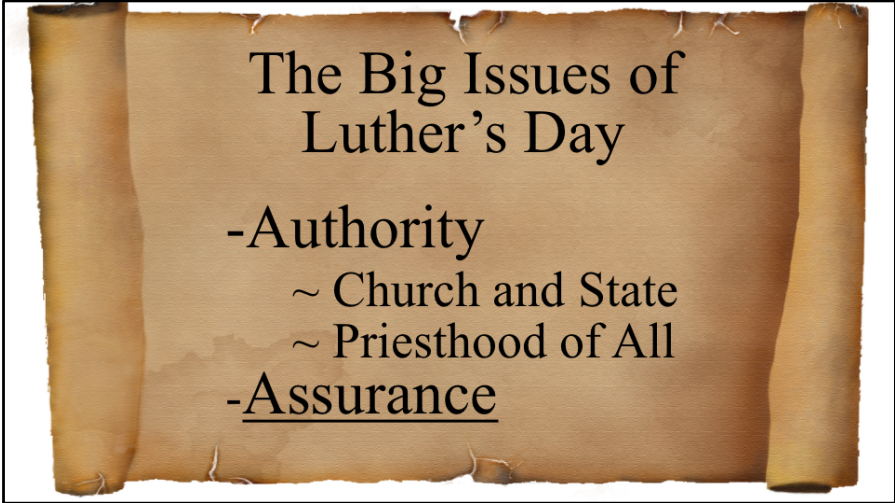
1 Peter 2:4-5

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵**you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,** to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

ESV

READ SLIDE (verse 5 only)

TR: The other big issue of the day, the other piece of parchment on which the abuses of relics and indulgences were written, was . . .



The Big Issues of
Luther's Day

-Authority

~ Church and State

~ Priesthood of All

-Assurance

. . . the issue of assurance.

-- Fearful doubt was common.

-- When our theology drifts into synergistic thinking, we easily fall into the idolatries related to finding some sense of assurance.

TR: Synergistic is a word that captures when two or more things work together . . .

Synergistic

“Monergistic Regeneration”

. . . so the issue of assurance is either because there is enough “synergistic” works between God and us OR . . .
-- as theologians call it, “Monergistic regeneration.”
-- Our being born again is either the solo work of God OR it is some sort of synergistic cooperation between God and us.
-- But where does assurance come from when even a part of our salvation is up to us?

TR: With that background in mind, think with me of the slogans of the reformation . . .



. . . called the Five Solas.

-- I created a seal to help you think about this, on the cover of your worship flier. The one on the screen adds the Latin phrases.

-- Literally it would be, Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, and God's glory alone.

-- I added some prepositions that help me remember by almost making a sentence out of it . . .

-- I could have started, "BASED ON . . ." Scripture alone we are justified, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for God's glory alone.

TR: Don't misunderstand. The church back then, as now, believed in Scripture, Grace, Faith, Christ, God's Glory . . .



. . . but the key to the reformation was the return to the ALONE basis of these five.

-- It starts with the foundational authority for the Christ-follower, which isn't in the Scriptures PLUS the church or the state or councils . .

TR: But in Scripture alone. Write down these references in your notes . . .

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Scripture is God's breathed . . . that is, "inspired."

TR: Even in the first century, the Apostle Paul had to warn the churches not to go beyond what is written . . .

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us **not to go beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Jesus, Himself, addressed this issue when He said . . .

Mark 7:8-9

“You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

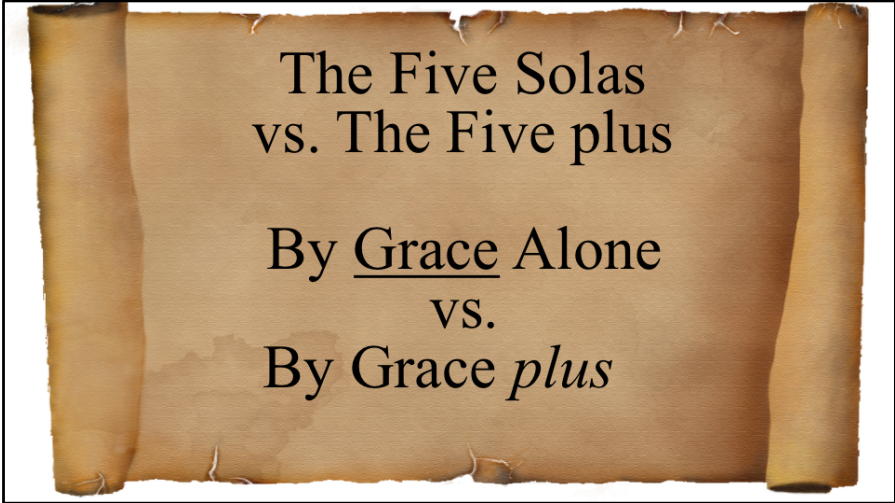
⁹And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- When we say “Scripture PLUS” we have to ask, which takes precedence when they are in conflict?**
- What a great slogan the EFCA had from the beginning of the movement . . . “Where stands it written?”**

TR: On the basis of Scripture alone . . .



The Five Solas
vs. The Five plus

By Grace Alone
vs.
By Grace *plus*

- . . . we realize that we are justified by grace alone.**
-- Grace is unmerited favor.
-- GRACE = God's riches at Christ's expense . . .

TR: Our salvation is by God's grace ALONE. Write down these references . . .

For **by grace** you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: And also this one . . .

Romans 5:20-21

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, **grace abounded all the more**, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace also might reign** through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- The law of works to earn merit before God . . . to be synergistic with God, is a denial of grace.

TR: That's what Romans 11 teaches . . .

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

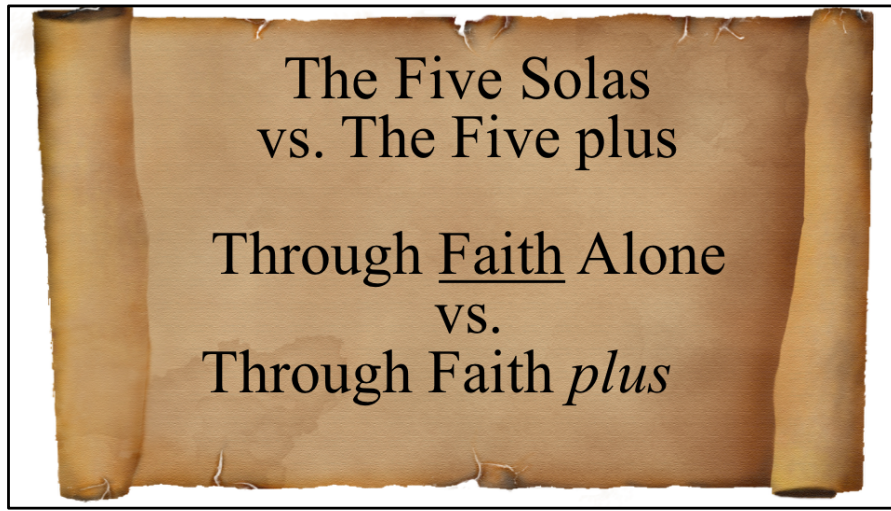
ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Grace PLUS works = No grace.

-- Dr. James White states so well, "The issue has never been the necessity of grace. It has always been the sufficiency of grace!"

TR: The application of justification by grace is . . .



. . . through faith alone.

-- It is understandable if we can't easily differentiate grace alone and faith alone . . . because they are so interwoven.

-- Salvation is not a synergistic work . . . it is God's work applied to us as we receive it by faith alone.

-- The formula is not FAITH + WORKS → Justification.

TR: Scribe these references on your parchment . . .

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed **from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."**

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Paul's letter to the Romans was critical for Luther's renewed understanding of God's teaching in His Word.

TR: A few chapters later, we read . . .

Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Faith is the same as belief. It is trusting God when He says He will work salvation in us if we have faith in Christ.

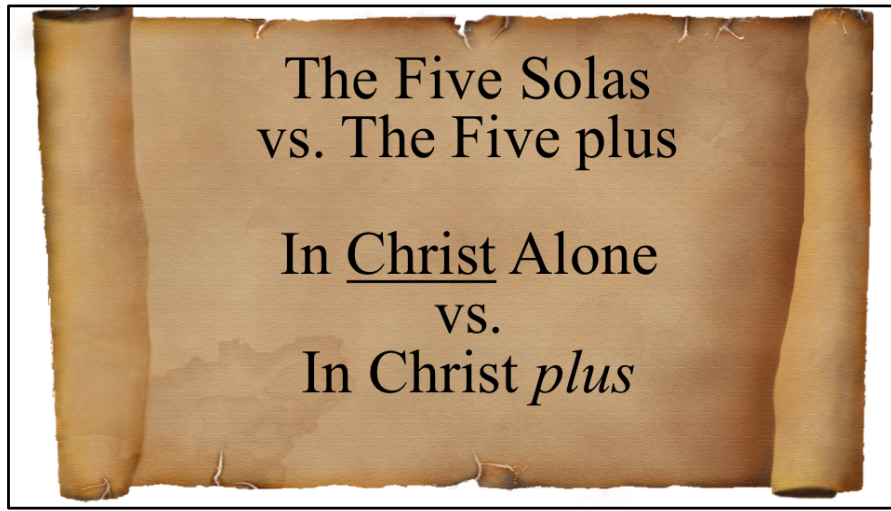
For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Faith, belief, trust . . . these are not works but merely receiving the grace of God.

TR: This justification by grace, that is received through faith, is provided for us as we place our faith . . .



The Five Solas
vs. The Five plus

In Christ Alone
vs.
In Christ *plus*

. . . in Christ alone.

-- Salvation is the solo work of God through Christ's death and resurrection.

TR: Some Scriptures to consider . . .

Acts 4:11-12

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²**And there is salvation in no one else,** for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Romans 3 captures "justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone" when it says . . .

Romans 3:22b-25a

For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,** ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Galatians warns us how important justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone really is . . .

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.
⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: The danger is trying to establish our own righteousness through our own works . . .

Romans 10:3-4

For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and **seeking to establish their own**, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: It is IN CHRIST alone that we become right with God . . .

We implore you on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake
he made him to be sin who knew
no sin, so that **in him we might
become the righteousness of God.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- It is in Christ alone.

TR: The final Sola is . . .



READ SLIDE

TR: The young Martin Luther was afraid of God and when he looked for help in the midst of the horrible thunder storm . . .



. . . he cried out to St. Anne, the patron saint of miners.

-- Whether giving glory to the saints or to Mary as the mediatrix of heaven, it is so easy to deal with our fearful doubts by making idols.

-- An idol is an idol, even if it has a halo around it.

-- How easy it is to say, "I've trusted Christ, AND I . . ."

TR: But ALL of our boasting must be in the Lord . . . salvation is His work and His ALONE . . .

1 Corinthians 1:29-31

so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him **you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, "**Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.**"

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Perhaps we're tempted to roll our eyes at this history lesson, but the truth is we need "Semper RE"

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

I’m thinking of the Marine motto, Semper Fi, which is short for Semper Fidelis, “always faithful.”

-- Semper Re could be short for Semper Reformanda, “always reforming.”

-- Even as the Pietistic movement was needed, 250 years after the reformation, to bring us back . . .

-- . . . SO, we need to move from the parchment of back then to the quadrille graph paper of today.

TR: We are tempted to pull the five solas apart but I picture them as . . .



**LIKE A
5-part
EPOXY**

. . . a five part epoxy.

-- They are all part of God's formula for creating a firm and resilient believer.

TR: Why do we need to be always reforming? Why do we need to be preaching the gospel to ourselves everyday?

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

a. **“Itching Ears”** are very contagious

READ SLIDE

-- As Paul warns young Timothy, people will gather teachers who will scratch their itching ears.

-- It is easy to say I believe the Bible but then spend more time reading or listening to what others think rather than digging into the primary source itself.

TR: We need to be always reforming because . . .

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

- a. “Itching Ears” are very contagious
- b. “Jumping **Blame**” is a fiction

READ SLIDE

- We often want to blame others for our situation . . . “they were the ones who had the power and authority to do something about it.”
- “If our society is a mess, it is the church’s fault.
- If our church is a mess, it is my fault.”

TR: We need to be always reforming because . . .

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

- a. “Itching Ears” are very contagious
- b. “Jumping Blame” is a fiction
- c. The Idol of “I Helped” looms large

READ SLIDE

-- We want to say “I helped” . . .

-- “Why should God let you into heaven?” Because of Jesus
AND . . .

**TR: Even today, the teaching of indulgences continues . . .
though not for sale, they are available as I’m told visitors . . .**



- . . . to Scala Sancta are encouraged to kneel their way to the top of the stairs and receive merit for doing so.**
- Even Protestants have told me that they got baptized again in the Jordan because they thought that would give them an additional blessing.**
 - Will that give us more blessing than being baptized in the Muskegon, as it runs through Big Rapids or Newaygo?**
 - Some will object . . . if we don't make our works earn us merit how will we keep our kids in line?**
 - It will not be by the idol of "I helped." That will only sever a person from Christ.**

TR: We must always be reforming because . . .

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

- a. “Itching Ears” are very contagious
- b. “Jumping Blame” is a fiction
- c. The Idol of “I Helped” looms large
- d. Fearful doubt leads to being “Assurance Poor”

READ SLIDE

-- So many say they believe but yet they wonder whether “they’re good enough.”

TR: We need to preach the gospel to ourselves everyday so we remember . . .

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: and that . . .

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Assurance comes from GRACE ALONE . . . cf. Spurgeon wanting to have a clock that when it struck the hour it would say "by grace are ye saved."

TR: We need to be always reforming, always preaching the gospel to ourselves, because . . .

Why “Semper Reformanda” (Always Reforming)?

- a. “Itching Ears” are very contagious
- b. “Jumping Blame” is a fiction
- c. The Idol of “I Helped” looms large
- d. Fearful doubt leads to being “Assurance Poor”
- e. “Reasonable Idolatry” is easy to justify

READ SLIDE

-- We want to avoid “easy believism” so we say it is FAITH PLUS . . . and what do we do when we know we can’t provide the PLUS?

-- We imagine ways to have longer on the test (like purgatory) OR . . .

-- We consider it reasonable to be able to get the answers from other super students (the merits of the saints) . . .

-- And then we need to figure out who has the authority to hand those out (the authority of the priests).

-- “heresy makes sense” . . . THE FIVE PLUS makes sense . . . but it is a sense that seems right in our eyes but is wrong in God’s.

TR: Martin Luther, following others like John Hus, brought the issues to the forefront when he . . .



. . . nailed the theses to the door.

TR: The truth is that our faith may be like a poorly mixed epoxy, “soft” in spots, because we haven’t mixed the five solas together . . . so for the next 8 weeks we are going to . . .

GOSPEL FLUENCY

48

**. . . seek to become more gospel fluent . . . to be SEMPER RE . . .
preaching the gospel truths into our daily thoughts.**

**TR: And as we start to see ourselves and the world around us
“through gospel lenses” then we will find ourselves doing what
Jesus wants . . .**

GOSPEL FLUENCY

49

**“IN” our communities by
being INtentionally prayerful**

**, , , being salt and light by first of all being Intentionally
Prayerful IN our communities**

**TR: and then, becoming fluent enough in the stories of those in
our communities whom we listen to AND to the God’s good
news story of the gospel that we adhere to, that . . .**

GOSPEL FLUENCY

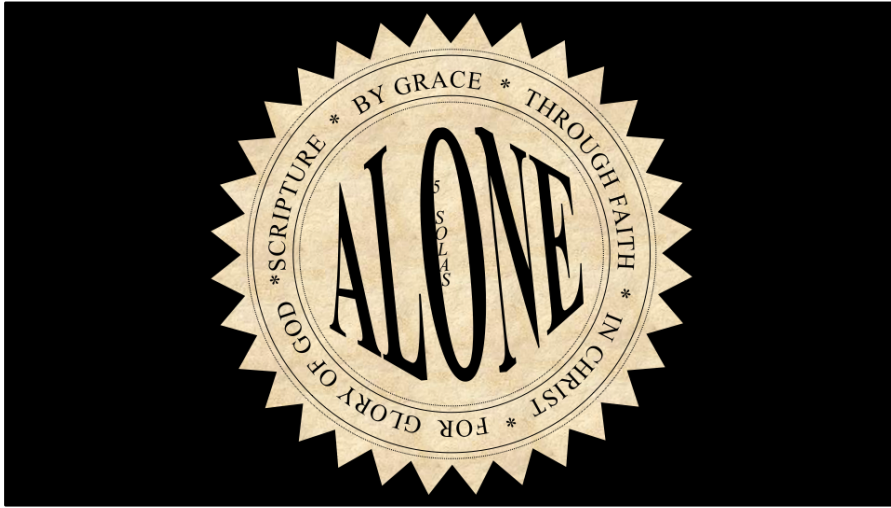
“IN” our communities by
being **IN**tentionally prayerful

“INfluence” by translating
God’s Story so others can
understand and choose

. . . we can be translators so all can understand.

-- We won’t post the story in Latin and wonder why no one believes . . . we will become faithful translators because we understand the language of both.

TR: A person who is gospel fluent will bear the seal . . .



. . . of the five solas . . . Based on Scripture alone, we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.