

The Protestant Reformation 1517-1648 Church History Week #7

Church History Timeline up to now:

Review

In the last few hundred years of church history we have seen the pendulum in the church swing in two directions. From the excess and immorality within the church to the mystics who wanted nothing to do with worldly things but wanted an experience with God.

Some of the leading mystics were crying out for reform within the church and so far, the church would not listen. The Church of Rome was content in her wealth and power and saw no reason to change their lifestyle nor their theology.

That would not sit well with some within the church. They could no longer stand on the sidelines and allow these abuses to take place. Someone had to say something and make a stand.

I. The Protestant Reformation

“We might define the Protestant Reformation as that movement of religious reform that resulted in the creation of the national Protestant churches between 1517 and 1545.” Earl Cairns

It is important to point out that the Reformation affected only Western Europe, including the British Isles. In fact, for the most part the Reformation found a home in those countries north of the alps, mostly in Germany and Switzerland and then into Western Europe. Those countries south of the Alps, largely stayed under the control of Rome.

The Eastern Church was totally unaffected by this whole movement.

Of course it also depends on which side of the aisle you sit on as to whether you think the Reformation was a good thing or a bad thing. For us, Protestants, this is something to celebrate. This is absolutely one of the highpoints in church history. Martin Luther is our hero. We'll see that he is far from perfect and had many flaws, but he is a hero to us none the less.

If you are in the Roman Catholic Church, this is a blight in church history. Martin Luther is no hero and is in fact a heretic that started the Reformation because he wanted to get married and was a megalomaniac, someone who was obsessed with himself and his desire for power.

There are as we might expect a myriad of reasons that brought about the Protestant Reformation but for the sake of time I'll point you to read those chapters in Bruce Shelly's book so we can jump right in.

Remember too that the mystics had made great inroads into Germany and books like Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ had made a huge influence on many people. There was this stirring to leave the formalism of the high church and connect the soul with God. That would be the soil upon which the Reformation would sprout.

It is a shame that we can only spend 90 minutes on the Reformation. We could easily spend 90 minutes on each of these men we will talk about tonight and still not do them justice.

(I. The Protestant Reformation)

And there are simply so many other events that I'm so saddened we have to skip that are truly important to this time period: **The Anabaptist Movement** (some of you have a Mennonite or Brethren background – those are your people); **The Council of Trent in 1545** which formally denied the Reformed teachings and called anathema (damned to hell) those who held these teachings. By the way the teachings of the Council of Trent were approved once again in Vatican II in 1962-65 and in the last Catholic Catechism in 1992.

We should talk about Thomas Cranmer and the Book of Common Prayer and people like Hugh Latimer and Martin Bucer and what a nut-job Henry VIII was and God-forbid that I didn't make time to talk about **John Knox** the great Scottish Reformer. Alistair Begg will never forgive me.

We should talk about John Smyth and the first Baptists and how one of these would bring Baptist theology with the Pilgrims coming over to America on the Mayflower. We could talk about the signing of the Mayflower Compact.

We could talk about the publication of the **King James Bible in 1611**. How do we not talk about this?

We would talk about one of the most important document ever written outside of the Bible, the **Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646**.

Oh my. Read chapters 24-31 in Bruce Shelly's book. Please!

We call this the Protestant Reformation. Why?

What is Protestantism?

It's often misconstrued that the word Protestant comes from the idea of Protesting. For instance, we were *protesting* the doctrines of the Catholic Church. While that may be true that's not where the word comes from.

The word comes from two Latin words, "Pro" – for, and "testari" – to declare or witness. Instead of being a negative word, protesting, it actually is positive word, meaning "for proclaiming the truth" or "for being a witness of the truth."

The four questions that Protestantism answered in a new way from the Roman Catholic Church are:

- 1) How is a person saved?**
- 2) Where does religious authority lie?**
- 3) What is the church?**
- 4) What is the essence of Christian living?**

The Catholic Answer:

- 1) How is a person saved? – *Through faith and good works*
- 2) Where does religious authority lie? *In the Pope and the leadership of the church.*
- 3) What is the church? *The authority of Christ on earth the only way to reach heaven is to be in good standing with the church of Rome.*
- 4) What is the essence of Christian living? *Performing good works and fulfilling the seven sacraments of the church.*

The Protestant Answer:

- 1) How is a person saved? *Not by works but by faith alone in Christ.*
- 2) Where does religious authority lie? *Not in the visible institution called the Roman Church but in the Word of God found in the Bible.*
- 3) What is the church? *The whole community of Christian believers, since all are priests before God.*
- 4) What is the essence of Christian living? *Serving God in any useful calling, whether ordained in the ministry or a lay person.*

Martin Luther (1483-1546) (pic)

We can't talk about the Reformation and not talk about Martin Luther. However, our temptation might be to spend our whole time talking about him and John Calvin and we just can't do that. There are too many other important people we have to talk about tonight. But of course we do need to spend some time on this important figure.

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in the little town of Eisleben, Germany. Luther was born to fairly poor but pious and superstitious parents, especially his mother.

His father wanted him to be a lawyer and at first Luther agreed. But in 1505, he was caught in a severe thunderstorm while walking to the

town of Stotternheim. A bolt of lightning knocked him to the ground, and Luther became so afraid he was going to die that he cried out to Saint Anne, "St. Anne, save me! And I'll become a monk."

Much to his father's dismay, Luther kept the vow and later that year he entered an Augustinian monastery becoming a priest in 1507. There are great stories of Luther being so obsessed with his own sin that he would spend hours in the confessional box confessing every big and little sin he could think of. It wasn't uncommon for Luther to leave the confessional only to turn right around because he had forgotten one or two more. Luther took his sin seriously, not only spending hours in the confessional but flogging himself and fasting for three days at a time and sleeping in the cold of winter without a blanket.

Luther would say about this time in the monastery, ***"I kept the rule so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his sheer monkery, it was I. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work."***

His superiors, maybe in wanted to get rid of him and maybe because they also saw his academic abilities, sent him to Wittenberg University to earn a degree in theology.

If Luther was already beginning to be disillusioned with the church it was a trip to Rome in 1510 that sealed the deal. He saw the wealth and the extravagance of the church and felt as if the clergy there was just going through the motions and had a mechanical faith. Luther saw no real love for God, just external religiosity.

He went back to Wittenberg searching and wondering. He would say, ***"My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him."***

To say Luther was a troubled soul would be an understatement. He was driven by such a profound sense of his own sinfulness and of God's majesty. There seemed to be nothing that could soothe his soul. One day he burst out in response to one of his superiors counseling him to love God, ***"I do not love God! I hate him!"***

Then Luther began teaching the book of Romans and it didn't take long before God's Word did what it does, it opens the eyes of the blind.

Luther got to Romans 1:17 – “the just shall live by faith.”

Luther would write of this experience: *“Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning... This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.”*

Luther's eyes were now open. Man is saved only by his faith in the merit of Christ's sacrifice. The cross alone can remove man's sin and save him from condemnation. No amount of monkery can accomplish what Christ had already accomplished on the cross.

And he saw how this truth clashed with the teaching of the church he was in which taught that man is saved through faith and good works.

Indulgences

About this time another significant event took place. Through a series of things, one of which was being the Pope's need to raise funds to build St. Peter's cathedral in Rome, the selling of **indulgences** came back into popularity.

Indulgences were a way to reduce the amount of punishment someone had to pay for their sins. They usually received an indulgence by saying prayers or doing some good deeds. However it didn't take long for them to be even more abused by some clergy in the church.

The most famous abuser of indulgences and the man most closely associated with Martin Luther was a bishop named **Johann Tetzel**. Tetzel began selling the indulgences for money. The more money you spent the more forgiveness you received, both for you and for a dead relative.

(Tetzel pic)

Can you imagine the pressure? You don't want grandpa suffering the fires of purgatory do you? Put a little money in the coffer and his time will be shortened. Put a lot of money into the coffer and he'll get out completely.

Tetzel had a cute little jingle: **“As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”**

Tetzel claimed that repentance was not necessary for the buyer of an indulgence and that the indulgence gave complete forgiveness of all sin.

Money was coming in hand over fist and Luther was furious over the abuse.

Luther had to do something, and something he did:

So, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg (pic). It's important to know that in these 95 theses Luther is condemning the abuses of the indulgence system and challenged all comers to a debate.

(next year is the 500 years anniversary of this event – going to be nuts over there!)

Luther didn't begin by wanting to break from the Roman Catholic Church, he and many others only wanted to *reform* the church. Thus the term, Reformation.

It wouldn't take long however for Luther and others to realize that real reform was not going to happen and a break was the only way forward.

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) (pic)

If Luther would be the prophetic voice and face of the Reformation it would be people like Philip Melanchthon who would be the theologian of the Reformation. It's not an understatement to say that no one in the Reformation better put into words the theology that we hold so dear today as did Philip Melanchthon. Mostly surely John Calvin is a giant

and we'll get to him but we can't overlook, the most overlooked guy in the Reformation who did so much.

While Luther was the firebrand and stirring up controversy and honestly, sometimes saying some crazy, embarrassing things about the Pope and against the Jewish people, Melanchthon is working away writing down biblical, solid theology. He is responsible for the amazing Augsburg Confession and was Luther's friend and scholar for more than 30 years.

Sample of the Augsburg Confession:

- Lutherans believe that good deeds of Christians are the fruits of faith and salvation, not a price paid for them.
- Man cannot be justified before God through our own abilities; we are wholly reliant on Jesus Christ for reconciliation with God. (This is often described as the one article by which the "Lutheran church stands or falls".)
- Lutherans believe that there is one holy Christian church, and it is found wherever the gospel is preached in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
- The Sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) are physical manifestations of God's Word and His commitment to us. The Sacraments are never just physical elements, but have God's word and promises bound to them.
- The Lutheran notion of justification by faith does not somehow condemn good works; faith causes them to do good works as a sign of our justification (or salvation), not a requirement for salvation.
- Lutherans keep the saints, not as saviors or intercessors to God, but rather as examples and inspirations to our own faith and life.

Back to Luther (new pic of Luther)

Luther would be summoned to several councils to talk about his views and in July of 1519 he would debate the immanent Catholic Theologian, John Eck at Leipzig.

By this time Luther is preaching salvation by faith alone, condemning the authority of the Pope (and calling the Pope all kinds of nasty names that I can't repeat here), railing against the abuse of indulgences and insisting on the priesthood of all believers, amongst other things.

In 1520 Pope Leo X issued a papal bull and excommunicated Luther and his books were burned. What did Luther do in response? He burned the papal bull publically on December 20, 1520.

All of this led to the now famous event of the Diet of Worms in 1521.
(pic)

A 'diet' was simply a formal assembly of people from all over the empire. Worms was the name of the city in Germany.

Luther was promised safe conduct and arrived in Worms on April 16. The next day, April 17, Luther stood before the assembly led by none other than John Eck who asked if these some 25 books were written by Luther. Luther agreed that he had written them and then Eck asked Luther to recant of the theology he wrote about in the books. Luther thought about it and asked for 24 for hours to pray and think some more. Eck told him to report back tomorrow.

Luther spent the time in agony. He understood what was at stake and whom he was up against. He had a great appreciation for the church and knew that he stood largely alone.

The next day he came before the imperial assembly, stood up and said these now famous words:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me. Amen”

Shortly after this speech, Luther got out of Dodge. He saw the handwriting on the wall and fled.

On April 25, the council gave its verdict:

“For this reason we forbid anyone from this time forward to dare, either by words or by deeds, to receive, defend, sustain, or favor the said Martin Luther. On the contrary, we want him to be apprehended and punished as a notorious heretic, as he deserves, to be brought personally before us, or to be securely guarded until those who have captured him inform us, whereupon we will order the appropriate manner of proceeding against the said Luther. Those who will help in his capture will be rewarded generously for their good work.” *Papal Nuncio at the Diet of Worms*

We now know that Prince Frederick of Germany hid Luther in the Castle at Wartburg (pic). It was also here that Luther would translate the Bible into German which would further spark the Reformation as people could read in the own language about salvation by faith alone.

Luther would in fact go on to marry a former nun named Katherine von Bora in 1525 (pic) and from everything we can tell, they had a pretty good marriage. They would have six children together.

As you can imagine, it took a pretty special woman to be married to a man like Martin Luther. (pic of the two of them) One of my favorite stories of her and them involves a season in Luther’s life like so many other great men and women of God where he was experiencing severe depression. He was down and wasn’t coming out of it so Mrs. Luther decided to try something. One day Martin came down for breakfast and his wife was dressed all in black as if she were about to attend a funeral. “What are you dressed like that for?” asked Luther. “God has died” replied his wife. Luther was shocked and asked why she would say such a thing when God has most certainly NOT died. Her reply, “Then why you are acting as if he has died?” Quite a woman!

Of course there is so much more that would could say about Martin Luther and it’s almost a crime to stop but we must.

He died on February 18, 1546 at the age of 62. Oh all that he accomplished in 62 years on this earth. (pic of his tomb). He was buried beneath the pulpit at the Castle Church in Wittenberg. That's where I want to go. Just bury me right underneath here.

Map of Protestant influence in the world as of 2010, largely due to Martin Luther (see map). It's hard to imagine too many people that have had more of an influence today in Protestant religious circles than did Martin Luther. From his theology to his famous hymns including the brilliant "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

**A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.**

**That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them,
abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who
with us sideth: Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His kingdom
is forever.**

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) (pic)

While this is going on in Germany, God is also at work in Switzerland at the forefront there is a man named Ulrich Zwingli.

He was a priest in Switzerland and at one point threw himself into the Greek language and reading the New Testament in the original language it was written in. It was here that Zwingli came to know the true gospel of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone by grace alone. I'll come back to those phrases

On January 1, 1519 Zwingli became pastor at the church in Zurich. He soon announced that he was doing away with the lectionary and he was

instead going to preach through the book of Matthew. Radical at the time.

The more Zwingli preached the bible the more he and his people saw the differences between the Scriptures and what Jesus said and what the Roman Catholic Church was preaching.

A break was beginning and over the next couple of years the reforms expanded in Switzerland. Priests and nuns married, Catholic images were removed from the churches, and in a final break, the mass was replaced by a simple service in which preaching was emphasized.

Hmmm?

While all of this is going on in Switzerland under Zwingli and Luther is leading the charge in Germany, it made sense for them to get together and combine forces. Someone tried and while Luther and Zwingli agreed on 14 of 15 important doctrines it was the one difference that kept them apart. It had to do with the Eucharist. Zwingli saw the Lords supper as more symbolic and while Luther stopped short of Transubstantiation, he was closer to that than a mere symbol. The two simply couldn't comprise and the story is told of Luther trying to prove his point that the elements for more than symbolic by pounding on the table and quoting the words of Jesus, "This is my body, this is my body..."

Zwingli's reform movement paved the way in Switzerland and eventually in Geneva as well which would pave the way for some guy named John Calvin would soon come on the scene.

Zwingli's teaching stirred great controversy and the factions broke out into fighting and in one battle, on October 11, 1531 Zwingli was hacked to pieces and his body disgraced by his enemies (pic).

John Calvin (1509-1564) (pic)

John Calvin was born on July 10, 1509 in a region of France and was the fourth son and whose mothers died do to complications in his birth. His father was fairly wealthy and from the start wanted his sons to join the ministry.

If Luther and Melanchthon were the leaders of the first generation of Reformers, Calvin would most certainly lead the second generation of Reformers. He stands as a giant among giants to be sure.

His name, Calvinism and the phrase “Reformed Faith” are almost synonymous and “Presbyterianism” is the form of church government that Calvin used. You simply can’t speak of the Reformation and get away from the person of John Calvin.

Calvin was exceptionally bright and would study philosophy and law and would learn Latin and eventually Greek, which would be a huge help to his learning of the Bible.

In 1533, when Calvin was about 24 years old he had a conversion experience. Apparently he had been familiar with the writings of Luther and had been influenced by them. He would eventually leave France and set up shop in Geneva, Switzerland which would be the home of Reformed Theology. While people spoke German in Zurich, Switzerland, French was the language of Geneva. Calvin was home.

What do you say in a few minutes about a man like John Calvin? He is as *polarizing* a figure as any man.

Just ask someone today, are you a Calvinist? And get ready for a fight. There is so much ignorance and characterizations about Calvinism that I try and stay away from the term. But, I am a full-fledged 5 Point Calvinist or as John MacArthur rightly says, I prefer to be called a 5 point Biblicist I because these points are true to the Bible, not just John Calvin.

Luther and Calvin agreed on much but differed in emphasis. If Luther emphasized justification by faith, Calvin emphasized the sovereignty of God. Luther emphasized preaching while Calvin emphasized a formal system of theology. Make no mistake, Calvin was a great preacher and a sensitive shepherd of his people. But maybe his most important gift to the church was his *Institutes of Christian Theology*. He completed them when he was just 26 years old. What were you doing when you were 26? (hold them up)

I cannot encourage you enough to do yourself a great favor and sometime in your life, sooner than later, read this.

For now here is one excerpt from my own copy:

“For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him – they will never yield him willing service. Nay, unless they establish their complete happiness in him, they will never give themselves truly and sincerely to him.” Institutes Chp. 2.1

This is utterly readable and practical and rich in theology and the majesty of God. Seriously, read it.

(back to title and pic)

Calvin unfortunately is too often characterized as being mean spirited and uncaring and I'm sure he was at times. Great leaders often have great faults. Do a cursory study of the great leaders, secular and religious and there is a common thread amongst them.

But Calvin was good pastor in every sense of the word. He had a high view of preaching the Scriptures, had a tender heart for God and his people and was responsible for thousands coming to Christ because of his proclamation of the gospel. Which is so interesting because one of the greatest knocks against Calvinism is the thought that there would then be no need for evangelism if God's sovereign election were true.

I only point you to church history to prove that's not true. From Calvin to some of the greatest missionaries and evangelists the world has ever known, they would also consider themselves Calvinists. From George Whitfield to Jonathan Edwards, to all of the Puritans to Charles Spurgeon and Martin Lloyd-Jones. To the greats of today like R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, Alistair Begg, John Piper, John Stott, J.I Packer, Billy Freels, and the list goes on and on. To say that the tenets of Calvinism and evangelism are at odds with each other, simply are not true.

Was he perfect? No. I encourage you to read Schelly's book for more on the life of this amazing man, John Calvin.

He died in 1564, simply worn out because of his weak body and arduous labors for the sake of the gospel. Theodore Beza, another amazing man we don't have time to talk about tonight would take over his work in Geneva.

Some of Calvin's Contributions:

1. Institutes of the Christian Religion right there at the top.
2. He wrote a commentary on every book of the Bible except 2 and 3 John and Revelation, which he said he "did not understand."
3. He wrote a hymn book mainly based on the Psalms.
4. We have two thousand of his sermons that have been saved.
5. We have fifty-seven volumes of his letters of advice to friends and other pastors. What a gift those are.
6. His emphasis on education would influence the puritans who in turn would set up the college system here in America.
7. We've already talked about his Presbyterian system of church government that is still used today by many.
8. His writings and teachings would serve as a huge influence on the Puritans themselves who would in turn have a huge influence on the church in America. Many of us have bookshelves filled with the writings of the Puritans and have been blessed because of them.

V. The Theology of the Reformation and How it Differs From Rome

The Five Sola's of the Reformation

1. Sola Fide
2. Sola Gratia
3. Sola Scriptura
4. Solus Christus
5. Soli Deo Gloria

The following summary of the Five Solas is adapted from the modern restatement in *The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals* (1996):

(I'll also point out that any good creed as these are, has both affirmations and denials. What is true and what is not true.)

Faith alone (*Sola Fide*)

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice. Our justification does not rest on any merit to be found in us, nor upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, nor that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*)

The inerrant Scripture (the Bible) is the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. It is denied that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

Grace alone (*Sola Gratia*)

In salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life. It is denied that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

Christ alone (*Solus Christus*)

Our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father. It is denied that the gospel is preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

Glory to God alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*)

It is affirmed that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. It is denied that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

Let me go back to a phrase under "Sola Fide" – "...In justification Christ's righteousness is **imputed** to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice. Our justification does not rest on any merit to be found in us, nor upon the grounds of an **infusion** of Christ's righteousness in us,..."

Herein lies one of the major differences between Protestant Theology and Roman Catholic Theology. As we have seen over the past several weeks we have a whole host of differences but none are more crucial than this one.

Let me explain how a person receives salvation in the Roman Catholic Church and then I'll contrast that with the view of salvation in the Protestant Church.

Infused vs. Imputed Righteousness

Salvation in the Roman Catholic Church begins at baptism. This is one reason why they are so eager to baptize a baby so young. I believe I was seven or eight days old when I was baptized in the Catholic Church.

When a baby is baptized in the Catholic Church they are *infused* with righteousness. That is they receive all of the righteousness they need in order to go to heaven. This righteousness is given to them based upon Christ's life and work on the cross. Christ's righteousness is infused to the person/baby at their baptism. So, technically speaking, if a baby were to die seconds after their baptism they would go directly to heaven. Why? Because they have 100% of the righteousness they need to go to heaven.

Here's where the problem lies. That baby at some point is going to sin. They throw temper tantrums at first and then they get older and lie and cheat and steal and hurt people and rebel against God's laws. Every time you sin, you lose righteousness. You started at 100% but now you lose it as you sin. Sin in acts of commission and in sin's of omission...

How do you get the righteousness back? The Roman Catholic Church has a variety of ways both for you and for your dead friends or relatives.

You can participate in the seven sacraments of the church. Things like going to confession, doing penance, taking the Eucharist, giving money to the church, doing good works, etc. All of these things gain you more righteousness. You can also visit holy sight or view relics of the church. These are all worth something toward gaining back righteousness.

Reality for 99.9% of people is that when we die under this system we don't have the 100% of righteousness we need. We've simply done more bad than good and so we're short in the righteousness department when we die. That's where purgatory comes into play. If you were a few percentage points short you spend a shorter time in purgatory, paying

off the rest of your sins. If you were way short, you spend a long time in purgatory.

Remember earlier I said there were a variety of ways to get righteousness back both for you and your dead friends or relatives. You can walk into any Catholic Church today and light a candle (for a fee) for a dead relative that lessens their time in purgatory. You may even have a mass said in their name (for a fee) that's worth even more time out of purgatory.

Did you notice that I said a moment ago that 99.9% of people don't have enough righteousness when they die? There are, however, a select few that not only have enough righteousness, but in fact, have more than enough righteousness when they die. They are the ultimate overachievers.

What happens to that extra righteousness? Good question.

Remember in Matt 16 when Jesus says to Peter that he is going to give him the keys of the kingdom? We understand that to mean Peter was going to be the first to preach the gospel and through the gospel proclamation would people enter the kingdom. Acts 2 and following proves that to be true.

However, the Roman Catholic Church believes that's not what Jesus meant at all. They believe that Jesus gave to Peter and thus to all of the subsequent Popes the keys, to what is referred to as the Treasury of Merit. They keys open the Treasury of Merit.

What is the Treasury of Merit? Think of it has a heavenly bank account that stores the infinite righteousness of Jesus and the extra righteousness of some of the saints throughout the ages. When a Pope dies he dies with extra righteousness. That goes into the Treasury of Merit. When Mother Theresa died, she had extra righteousness. That went into the Treasury of Merit.

The Pope then can now dispense this righteousness to faithful followers in the church of Rome. That's one reason why attending a mass said by the Pope has so many people thronging to be there. You get more

righteousness than attending a mass said by say, Father Murphy. You get an appointment with the Pope, better. You get to kiss the Popes ring, best!

Salvation in the Church of Rome is based upon an infused system of righteousness. You get it at baptism and spend a lifetime getting more and losing more.

BTW, you understand in Roman theology there are venal and mortal sins. Venal sins are sins are lesser sins while mortal sins are those sins that can only be forgiven by repentance and going to confession. That's why the belief is there in the Catholic Church that a person who commits suicide (self-murder) goes to hell. You can't repent and you can't ask for forgiveness for it because you're dead. So, you are damned and go to hell. I'm always amazed at how that finds its way into the thinking of so many evangelical Protestants as well.

In our view, how many sins did Jesus die for? All of them. Even murder? Even self-murder? Yes!

That's infused righteousness.

We believe in imputed righteousness. That is we believe that Christ's righteousness is imputed or credited to our account when we place our faith in Jesus at the moment of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says it so clearly: **“God made him who knew no sin, become sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of Christ.”**

At salvation, our sin is imputed or credited (it's an accounting term) to Christ's account and Christ's righteousness is then credited to our account.

This is why Luther called our righteousness an “alien righteousness” meaning it comes from outside of us. We didn't earn it, Christ did. It's not our righteousness, it's Christ's righteousness given to us.

Importantly, we believe that once we have received this righteousness from Christ, we don't lose it. We may sin and rebel against God but we do not lose our righteousness. We repent of that sin and restore our fellowship with God.

We echo the words of Paul that when we die, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

Infused vs. Imputed Righteousness

At the heart, one is salvation of faith and works to keep you saved.

We believe in the gospel as preach in the Bible and preached by the apostles and the early church.

That's why we are Protestants today. Standing in the long line of the apostles and many of the early church fathers and the Reformers like Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin and hundreds of others. We are here today and do what we do because of them who stood for the true gospel, many for the loss of their own lives.

We believe in sola fide – faith alone.

We believe in sola gratia – grace alone.

We believe in sola Scriptura – Scripture alone.

We believe in solus Christus – Christ alone.

We believe in soli Deo Gloria – For the Glory of God alone.