

The Reformation in Biblical Perspective  
The Reformation: The Crux Of The Issue  
Romans 5:1-5  
By: Dr. Harry Reeder  
November 1, 2009 – Morning Sermon

We will be looking at that key verse of the Reformation which is Romans 5:1. This text will be the only text we look at in this study. Someone asked me recently why I picked Daniel to preach on for Sunday nights. I picked it for two reasons. One is Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) show us how God's people live in a foreign land, how they live in a pagan culture. I believe we are in an increasingly pagan culture and I believe that passage is very crucial in telling us how to live today. Secondly, where is all this going to end? The book of Revelation tells you but the key to Revelation is Daniel but tonight we will not be in Daniel because of Reformation Sunday. We will look at the life of John Calvin and this portrait shows that he was not popular because of his good looks. Tonight we will see how and why the Lord used John Calvin, the churchman and we will look at a couple of his favorite passages of Scripture. He is 500 years old this year. Now, let's look at our text for this study.

Romans 5:1-5 says, *1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. This is God's Word. It abides forever, by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

Maybe you have read this book. I think it's the best biography on Martin Luther. The words are chosen from a moment in Luther's life. It is a place called the Diet of Worms and all of Christendom was a raid against him. As they were calling him to recant those simple things we do in worship – being saved by grace alone, through faith alone, through Christ alone and the Scripture alone is our only rule of faith and practice. As he was called to recant he asked for a night of consideration. That night he prayed and asked the Lord for strength and direction for to stand against all of Christendom with the awaiting verdict of his death, was a monumental moment. That next day he gave those statements that entitle Roland Bainton's biography on him which is "Here I stand. I can do no other. Unless convinced by reason or Scripture my conscience is bound. Here I stand."

It was 1517 and the Roman Church which was the prevailing church was desecrated by immorality right in the halls of papal authority. It was clouded with ritualism and superstition and the Gospel was no longer being preached. The lives of men and women were controlled. The latest scheme was a fund raising scheme to "refurbish" St Peter's basilica. A man by the name of Tetzl was the best fundraiser of all of them. He would go around and put on plays about the horrors of hell and purgatory and then an offer, an indulgence would be made that went something like this; "If you

would give an offering to the church then you can free loved ones with that offering from their eternal prospects.” He not only used plays to manipulate the fears of men and women and play upon their emotions for their deceased loved one but he also had a little song that he would sing that went like this; “When in the coffer a coin does ring, then from purgatory will the soul of your loved one spring.”

That as it were pushed Luther over the edge. He had been to Rome and seen the sexual immorality, even in the halls of clerical power. Most of all he struggled with the question, “How can a man be right with God” and he knew the deadness of ritualism. The church couldn’t save him. His ritual couldn’t save him. His guilt, shame and fears did not dissipate. On the contrary, they only increased with his efforts which were never enough. Then one day he read Romans 5:1; “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” He realized he wasn’t saved by his works but he was saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and yes faith has works and grace has a changed life but it’s not my changed life or my works but its Christ and His work that I receive by faith that God has granted me by grace that there I have eternal life. That only intensified the way that he would literally feel physical nausea when he saw the manipulation of God’s people with darkness and superstition and ritual and these latest indulgences.

So he stayed up and pinned 95 theses and that next day on October 31, 1517 he nailed it to the wall of Wittenberg, the castle church that kind of served as a bulletin board for the church. There he fastened an invitation to the leaders of the church for disputation and debate over the efficacies of indulgence concerning the eternal state of the souls of men. Then came his 95 theses and it was simply an invitation to an academic debate but it set a firestorm off that didn’t do what Luther wanted which was reformation of the church but it did reclaim, unplug and blew up the damn that held back the damns of superstition, ritual and darkness and the Gospel of grace began to flow and flow.

People tend to ask me why I enjoy this time of year so much to take the church calendar to remember the Reformation and that October 31 date. There are a couple reasons why I like to remember this. What I will share in this study is a very deeply held burden on my heart and the Reformation gives me an opportunity to hopefully articulate it, although I feel very inadequate to do so. So why celebrate the Reformation? One of the ways I like to do this is to just ask myself “what if there hadn’t been a Reformation, humanly speaking?” I know God can accomplish things in multiple ways but what if there had not been a Reformation?

You wouldn’t have a Bible in your own language. We would still be having Bibles in a dead language known only by clerical authorities. We would just have worship services of ritual, you wouldn’t participate, and you would only listen to people sing. You wouldn’t have a copy of God’s Word. A sermon would be delivered in a language that you didn’t understand but you were required to sit there and listen to it. There would be the notion of salvation by church ritual and you would never be free from your fear, shame and guilt because the works of man religious or not can never atone for our sins. There would have been no proper understanding of the freedom of the church from the state. There would be no Presbyterian Church in America or no Protestant church trying to hold fast to that evangelical message of the Gospel. I don’t think there would have been a Great Awakening in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century without the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. And if there was no Great Awakening there would be no United States of

America. Even with its imperfections, all that it has been or could be, wouldn't be here because it was birthed out of the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was birthed out of the Reformation and we would still be in the darkness of religion, apart from the powerful work of the Gospel. So I rejoice in that moment in history where Pentecost, glory, joy and message were reclaimed again.

Another reason I am glad for this moment in history is because in God's Word, God by example and by command would tell us, "You are a people of history. What I have come to do didn't start with you. It must be captured in every generation but it doesn't start with you. It's back here." So whenever God would do something He would call His people and tell them to do something to remember it, not to live in the past but to learn from the past. Pile up some stones. Raise an Ebenezer. Declare, hither to by thy help Lord, we have come to this point. Then bring your children there and tell your children what I did that they may leave there, not to live in the past but to learn from the past, to live in the present and to change the future. So I think it's appropriate to pile up some stones around significant moments of God's great movements. We are not to live in the past. We are not a museum but neither are we caught up in the arrogance of modernity that dismisses the past, the snobbery of chronology that's only about me and what I do that I don't have anything to learn from those saints of old that have gone before me. While I don't want to live in the past I do want to learn from it.

So we will do what God told His people to do and that is celebrate what I did. Investigate and learn from what I did. Then apply and anticipate what that will look like in the future. I believe the lessons of the Reformation must be learned because while Jesus did not die to put the United States of America here, the United States of America cannot exist without Him. I serve in the Presbyterian Church of America, and as much as I am committed and will pour myself out for the work of the Gospel in every other area and the work of the Kingdom around the world, I will not neglect what I know needs to happen in my own country. I believe that the answer we have today is not the tweaking of economic policy, not the rethinking of think tanks around foreign policy because I know there's a place for all of that.

I believe it's as simple as the fifth grade child I read about this week who was told to put a map of America together. The map was given to the child and cut up into states and the child put the map together. When the teacher asked the child, "How did you do get all the states in the right place?" the child turned it over because on the back side the child had drawn a picture of Christ. The child said, "If I get that right I'll get everything else right." I know that it desperately needs to happen in my country again but I don't believe there will be a Great Awakening until there is a revival in the church and I don't believe there will be a revival in the church until there is another reformation in the church. We need a new reformation.

I want to look back at that one key verse. There were three big issues in the Reformation – who, what and how. **Who** has authority in the life of a Christian? **What** is salvation? **How** is salvation received? Those are the three big questions that the Reformation answered that had been absolutely lost. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the answer was clear to who has the authority. It was the church and man that had the final authority then and even had a title called magisterium – church magisterium, clerical magisterium. When the church speaks that's the final the word of authority. The Reformers challenged it beginning with Martin Luther. Churches err, men err, counsels err, creeds can err for

there is only one place where authority is true, inerrant, and infallible in every area of life and practice and that is God's Word. God's Word alone is infallible and inerrant. God's Word is true and it is the Truth.

Secondly, what is the Gospel, what is salvation? Is salvation, the Gospel merely something in the hands of professional clerics that can be dispensed when people do what they say for them to do? Or is the Gospel the glorious message that God has seen the plight of humanity and sent His Son who has come into the world to save sinners, then went to a blood stained cross and there with His blood and His righteousness, He saves everyone who puts their trust in Him? So what is the Gospel? Then how do you obtain it? Do we obtain it by our works? Is it by the churches dispensing of it to the favored few? Is it merited? Or is it a free gift received by faith alone, grace alone, bringing faith alone, in Christ alone?

This passage in Romans was what set aflame the hearts of the reformers. Romans 5:1 says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* There are seven things that flow out of this verse. I will not cover them in depth but I do want to announce them. This is what set Martin Luther free. If I understand the Gospel message, how can a man be right with God which is by faith alone, through grace alone in Christ alone, then what are the blessings that come from that? These first few verses in Romans 5 outline seven of them.

The first one is, when Christ is your Savior and you are justified by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone, then you have peace with God. Notice that it is not you may have peace with God or if you do well you could get peace with God. No, it says you have peace with God. We who are sinners and are His enemies, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners and enemies, He paid for our sins and when we are in Christ we have peace with God.

The second one is we stand in grace. Romans 5:2a says, *"Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand..."* We don't stand on our works. We don't stand in religion. Now, do Christians work? Absolutely. Do we praise God for "religion" that is a sacred way of life because we follow Christ? Absolutely, but we don't stand in our strength or our works. We stand in the blood bought grace of Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross. We stand by grace.

Thirdly, we rejoice in hope. Romans 5:2 says, *"Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* Why will a David charge a Goliath? Why will a Paul ascend Mars Hill and do battle with the Athenian philosophers? Why will Paul attack Athens in all of its idolatry? Why will a Gideon serve and lead a small remnant into battle? Why will God's people move into the battle? It is because they have an unconquerable optimism. They have an unstoppable hope. Their Savior has won the victory therefore they live rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. They live in that hope. Christians don't retire to the cynicism of the media. They don't retire into bitterness and anger. We can be angry at sin all we want to but when Christians see the onslaught of the evil one in the culture and nation around them, they rise up and rejoice in that unstoppable optimism of the hope that is found in Jesus Christ and they run to the battle.

They not only have peace with God, stand in grace, rejoice in hope but fourthly they rejoice in their sufferings. Romans 5:3-5a says, *3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces*

*character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame...* Here is this glorious statement where we not only rejoice in hope but we don't close our eyes to the fact that we live in a broken world and we know we will falter and fail but we know that our God is gracious, steadfast, faithful and so we also rejoice in our sufferings. That's why Peter says don't be surprised at the suffering. Christians are not surprised at suffering. They know they are in a fallen world. They know they are in the midst of an evil people. They know that evil has consequences. They know that while they are in Christ they are also in the world. They are not only, not of the world and they will be taken through the world but they are in a world that is storm tossed with the evil that is all around them. They also know that their God is sovereign and if there is adversity and suffering then God has a reason for it and they know that God will use it.

Do you know what news item last week got the most hit on the internet? Don't say health care because that is number two. The number one news item last week was about this plane that flew about 150 miles past its destination and everyone kept hitting the internet to find out about that news story. Everyone was just consumed with wanting to know why. I was reading about in the Wall Street Journal and they think they have come up with the reason why. If I'm a passenger on a plane they get mad at me if I don't put my tray table up when they ask me to and yet they don't know when to put the wheels down to land. That interests me too. I can just see those attendants saying, "Put up your tray, put up your tray. When are they going to put down the wheels?" We only missed it by 150 miles. That's not even close, in my opinion, but everybody is interested in that story. An airline captain was writing an article and he said, "I know everybody is looking for something on this incident but here is what I think. I don't know what the pilots were doing but it captured their attention. I know it's a big airplane and I know there are a lot of people on board but there is nothing more boring than flying a commercial airline after you have done it about 100 times. I think it was just boredom. Even the computer will land a plane now." I think that was supposed to comfort me but it didn't give me a whole lot of comfort.

Another man commented on that and he said, "Let me give you another illustration of this. It's like when they first built the New Jersey turnpike. When they built the New Jersey turnpike it was supposed to save lives with no stopping but a straight shot and everybody started getting killed on it. They did a survey and found out that everybody was falling asleep because the first time they built the New Jersey turnpike it was one straight shot without a curve and people got bored and fell asleep. So they went back, tore it up and put in 20 plus curves just so people would stay awake while driving." God knows that and He's put some curves in your life. When things are moving right along for us and we're cruising we start falling asleep in life, don't we? Or we even do something worse where we take God's blessings and we count them more important than the God who has blessed us. We just kind of keep moving through life. Don't be surprised at the ordeals because God puts them in there to work on your life and my life.

That brings me to that fifth blessing. When we have peace, stand in grace, rejoice in hope and in our sufferings, what other blessings are there? The fifth blessing is a transformed life. Why is it transformed? Romans 5:3b-5a says, **3** ...*(because) suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame...* God has a changed life for you and me. It doesn't have to be business as usual. Everyday can be a glorious day even when I'm doing the

same thing because it's God who is at work in me who has multifaceted purposes in my life and I can anticipate every single day being different. One man said, "It's God who saves you and He turns the alarm clock into an opportunity clock." So tomorrow morning when the clock goes off, think "ALARM!" This is a day the Lord has made and He has saved me and I can rejoice. What opportunities does He have for me today to serve Him? He changes me, not Phariseically from the outside but from the inside out. He produces character, endurance, and hope in me.

The sixth blessing that comes through this justification that was reclaimed by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone is that you are filled up with the love of God. Romans 5:5a says, "*and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts...*" The love of God has been poured out into your hearts and nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ. You belong to the church of Jesus Christ, the bride of Christ and the Groom has left His Father. He has laid down His life to purchase His bride and there will be no divorce. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). And it's been poured out in your heart.

The seventhly blessing is you have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5b says, "...*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*" I want to make this very clear. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not a second blessing for some Christians. It is the act of God to make you a Christian and then keep you a Christian. If you are a believer you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. There may be subsequent fillings, anointings, and opportunities that He will do for certain occasions but you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Not only has the love of God been poured out upon you but the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon you and you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and into Christ Himself and He now owns you by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the down payment to assure that everlastingly you will be with the living God forever. So those are our seven blessings in Christ.

So where would that lead us? Here are a couple of thoughts in closing. I believe we need a new reformation. I believe we desperately need a great awakening. To have a great awakening we need a revival. To have a revival we need a new reformation. I believe that's where we are today in terms of the church itself. We are not going to have a reformation in the church as long as members of the church of Jesus Christ treat Her as a by-word or as drive-by church and I'm not just talking about the assembled worship on the Lord's Day. We shouldn't think, "My engagement in the body of Christ is kind of a convenient thing and if all my other interests in life allow me to give some time to His church that He purchased with His own blood..." As long as we treat Her, the church, as a by-word there will be no reformation. We need to say to Christ, "Your Bride is important to me" and do likewise. The answer is not found in some political party. Please do not misrepresent me. I love para-church ministries. I'm engaged in them and I participate in them. But my hope is not in para-church ministries, it is in the church of Jesus Christ itself. I believe God has planned to bless and move throughout nations where His church is. So that is my primary human embracement and I believe that there are some things that need to happen.

I believe that one thing that needs to happen is the reformation of authority again, the authority of God's Word which is inspired, inerrant and infallible. There is a fresh

attack on the inerrancy of God's Word today that the Bible becomes God's Word or some think it's a collection of things that God uses to transport His Word to your life. No, God's Word does not contain truth because God's Word is the Truth. I believe one of the ways this is showing up in the church today is that the church feels irrelevant, marginalized so we go to the culture and ask people "Why don't you come sit in our pews? Why don't you come join our church?" They say, "It's because you believe this and you do this and that." So we hear what people say their needs are and then we go back to the Bible and act like the Bible is a can of play dough where we will take the Gospel and mold it up to what people say their needs are. So we come out with these aberrations where people say, "I need to feel good about myself. I need self esteem so I'll go here" and we rework the Gospel that Jesus went to the cross for my self esteem. So we come up with a therapy Gospel to give people therapy to cope with life.

Some think their life is only meaningful when people applaud them and they don't applaud unless I have power, prestige or position so we come over here with this unbelievable destitute, depraved, prosperity gospel where Jesus went to the cross and it's all about how much I can name and claim and know in this world. I believe we have to come back to the fact that the Bible is not only inerrant to tell us who God is and what He has done but God's Word says the answer to your life is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man, went to a cross, took all of your sins, paid for all of the sins of all of His people to deliver you from those sins and that Gospel message is not only what it declares for you but the Bible tells you what your needs are. It is not self assessment that tells me what my needs are. John Calvin said, "My heart is an incessant idol factory and I keep trying to make religion and everything about manufacturing the idols that I say I need to live." The Gospel says your problem is not that you don't have enough things for that idol making heart but your problem is you need a new heart and God says, "I'll give it to you. I will give you a new heart that gives you a new record that gives you a new life." So the Bible is not only my authority for the message of Good News but it is my authority to tell me what actually the bad news is in my life.

Secondly we have a crisis in this reformation of not only the Word of God as the final authority of what we believe, practice and to guide us into life, but also when we come to the Bible we have a crisis again of the Gospel. Jesus did not go to the cross to give us a death model or a martyr's witness. Certainly there is a model there and certainly you could call Him a martyr in one sense but if you and I understand the Gospel, Jesus went to the cross and His Father put Him to death that you and I might be delivered from our sins to Him forever. That's the Gospel. It is that Jesus Christ delivers us from our sins to His Father that I might have Him and He has me forever. It is that Gospel message that men and women need to hear lovingly and compassionately from God's people.

Finally the church of Jesus Christ not only has a crisis of authority where we need to reclaim the authority of God's inerrant Word and we command our preachers not to give us feel good inspirational moments but give me 16 ounces to the pound of Biblical truth and I am going to open my Bible everyday. I am going to come to that Bible and mine out that truth in my own life because this is God's final authority, inerrant, and infallible for all that I believe and all that I need in life. I don't need just a happy moment. I need a Savior who gives me the life of rejoicing in hope and suffering because

I've got that truth built into my soul and in the fiber of my being. I know His Word is true and it will never fail me. I have a Gospel that tells me the One whom I did not want wanted me and He did not need me. He went to a cross and died for me. He has made me a promise that says, "I'll never let you go. I'll never leave you or forsake you. I will grow you up and take you to glory so that where I am there you may be also." I need that Gospel working in my heart and soul so that I can stay the course for Christ.

I believe that finally ends up where we reclaim as the church of Jesus Christ is a whole new platform. Right now we think that we will win people from the world by how much we are like them in the world. The Bible says no. The Bible says I want you in the world, don't leave it because I'll take you out when it is time but I don't want the world in you. It is not how much like them you are but it's how different you are and how much you love them. I do not believe that there is a program we can come up with that is going to initiate the great awakening.

I think one of the big mistakes we are making today is to think that the way we will change the world is by getting people in our buildings. Every assembling of the saints for worship here will not only have the Gospel but it will have a free invitation for people to come, not to an altar, but to come to Christ. Altars don't save, Jesus saves. But I don't believe that is what did it in the first century or the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It wasn't what happened when the saints gathered but it was what happened to sinners when the saints scattered and went out and said, "I don't need a program, I love you. I'm going to build a bridge to life in your life." That is what we need to do. I need to contact you. I need to treat you with dignity. You are made in the image of God, sin is destroying you and I love you. I have a message that will not only rescue and redeem but it will reconcile you to God and change your life.

God, when we gather for worship may people sense a people who are God-centered in their worship. It's not all about did my hot buttons get touched but has God been lifted up? Has God been glorified? Has the Father been exalted? Has the Son been exalted? Has the Holy Spirit been welcome? Has God been worshiped in Spirit? My soul blesses the Lord in truth. Evangelism isn't just about adding to the numbers of the church but it's about reaching lost sinners and rescuing the perishing that they might come to Christ, in Christ and for Christ. We desperately need to reclaim disciple making. Disciple making isn't just that I have 3 or 4 friends that will help me cope through life. Disciple making is getting a life on a life into the Word of God, spending time with each other and loving each other. We love each with the truth. It is truthing with love and loving with the truth. We are to be digging deep into the hearts and lives of one another so that God's people show that they are going to grow up and they are going to assist one another to grow up. As they grow up they are going to grow out to reach others for Jesus Christ.

I believe that kind of breadth and depth is what is desperately needed. Dear Jesus if it could happen in a place like Wittenberg, a small German village with a non descript lawyer turned monk, reformer and a fire was lit, then God could you do it here? God delights in taking ordinary people, in ordinary places to do extraordinary things.

When I was 15 years old there was a girl at church that I wanted to spend some time with. She was nothing like the woman I married. It was just mere childhood infatuation but at that moment it was something to me. I found out that she was a part of Youth For Christ. I am just as lost as I can be but I joined Youth For Christ. It was



amazing how quickly I could get religion. Then I found out she was in something called the Corral. I thought a coral was where you put animals but this was a singing group. I couldn't sing a lick but I joined the Corral. We went out singing every week doing youth crusades however I needed my own crusade but God used that in my life. Many times later in my life I remembered what we sung every single time. The crusade always started with the Corral standing up and singing, "Christ for me, Christ for me, He's my Savior, my Lord, my King. Now, He is my life and for Him I sing. Christ for me, Christ for me, as I go my way happy all the day, Christ for me, dear Jesus, for us again, Christ for me." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word with Your people. Thank You for the privilege to look at the past, learn from it but dear Jesus how we desperately need to move into the future. Dear friend, today you may have said to this Savior, "Jesus, thank You for being for me now I am Yours. I put my trust in You alone." Would you let us know if you prayed that prayer. We would like to pray with you and help you in your first steps of a new life that's a forever life. Christ for me. Lord, thank You for Your Word. It's the Truth. Thank You for the Gospel because it saves us from our sins and brings us to Yourself. Thank You that we might gloriously draw and bring others with us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.