

The Coming Reformation

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the recent article in Charisma by R.T. Kendall concerning the need for another reformation in the church. I was especially blessed because it took me back to an incident in my life almost twenty five years ago. My son Keith and I had been preaching “freedom from sin” through the “cross and blood of Christ” on television for about two years at the time. One day Eldred Thomas, the owner of channel 22 in Houston at that time, asked me to ride with him to Athens Texas. Along the way, Brother Thomas brought the conversation to the message we were preaching on his station. He said, “Brother Surface, what you are preaching is 'reformation theology.'” I had no idea what he meant. I responded, “No, I am not preaching what Luther and Calvin preached.” He answered, “I understand that, but if the church ever sees and believes what you are preaching, it will transform the church even more than Martin Luther's reformation.” I dropped the subject, because I knew what he was saying was far too big a task for me, and it still is. In retrospect, however, there are a few things out about the “reformation” we should be aware of.

When reading the “History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century” by Merle D'Aubigne, I wept as I learned of the early years of Martin Luther, and his struggles with inward sin. I identified with him in all he suffered, trying to please God with the monastic lifestyle he submitted to. As a young man, I had fasted more days in a year than I ate for three years straight. I gave over fifty percent of my income to the church and tried to pray three hours a day, trying to “please God” by the things I suffered. I was in my own “dark ages,” and reading the things Luther suffered until he understood “justification by faith” did much to deliver me from the darkness of religion, but it did nothing to deliver me from the bondage of “inward sin,” which Luther also struggled with. As I continued reading the history, I became aware that in later years, the Lutheran reformation became more “political” than “spiritual.” Millions of people were delivered from the bondage of a religious/political system that ruled the people with “fear of death” Hebrews 2:15, and punished even to burning at the stake any who dared to contradict them.

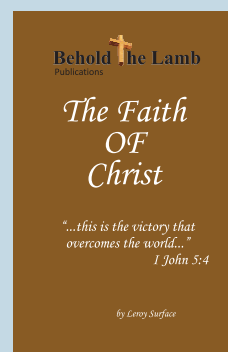
The reformation began when Martin Luther wrote ninety-five “theses” against the practice of selling “indulgences for sin.” In order to raise money to build “St Peter's Basilica” the Pope had decreed that forgiveness for every manner of sin could be purchased with money. It was a cruel system that kept the people in poverty as the Cardinals and the Pope became incredibly rich. Luther's writings on the subject brought swift and fierce action against him from his superiors in the church, and threatened even the loss of his life. His efforts toward reformation made little headway until he received the “revelation” of “justification by

faith.” This doctrine, instead of being “the truth” which Jesus said would make the people free from sin, turned out to be “a truth” that delivered millions of people from the bondage of the cruel religious system. If the people could be “justified by faith,” they had no need to confess their sins to a priest, or pay money to be forgiven. If every person could go directly to God through Jesus Christ, they did not need any man between them and God. The bonds of fear were broken off the people, and they abandoned the Catholic Church of the dark ages in such numbers they could not be restrained, even by the threat of death. It was wonderful deliverance for the people, but it left them in the same bondage to inward sin as before. Five hundred years later, sixteenth century theology has given us a weak and sin-laden church that fights against the idea that we could ever be free... from sin.

The coming reformation will be spiritual in nature. Multitudes will hear “*the truth*” for the first time, that Christ died to make them “*free from sin*” Romans 6:22. The “*light of the glorious gospel of Christ*” II Corinthians 4:4, will shine into the hearts of many as they hear, in the exact words of the apostles and prophets, the message of “*the Christ;*” who He is, and why He became a man to die on a cross. The “chains” will fall off the prisoners of sin, and they will go out free. Those who “*walk in darkness*” will “*see a great light*” Isaiah 9:2, and those who have lived without hope will “*rejoice in hope*” Romans 5:2.

The reformation of the twenty-first century is coming, and it's already beginning. It will not be spread by the devices of men, nor will it require millions of dollars to send. It will spread around the world quickly simply because it works, and those who receive it cannot be quiet about it. If you know the truth, and Christ has made you “*free from sin*” in your own heart and nature, stand up and say so. Don't be intimidated by those who are blinded to the truth. Preach the truth of the gospel of Christ without fear or favor, and God Himself will stand with you.

I have seen a vast majority of modern day preachers who have come under such bondage to “orthodoxy” that they must continually “*twist the scriptures*” in order to believe what the reformers taught. Why not “believe” exactly what the apostles actually said, and make the same stand for the truth that Jesus said will “*make you free*” from sin? Stand as firm as Luther did at “Worms” in the face of those who hated him, and say, “**Here I stand. I can do no other.**” This is the next “reformation” that must come to the church.



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