

First Sunday of End Time, Reformation
November 1, 2015
Revelation 14:6, 7
Luther- Called by God to Restore the Gospel
Rev. George Ferch

Dear friends in Christ Jesus, heirs of the saving gospel, regained in the Lutheran Reformation:

Some incorrectly believe we Lutherans worship Dr. Martin Luther. Nothing is further from the truth. It is true that we hold the good Dr. in high regard. We thank God for Luther, and for those who with him esteemed God's Holy Scriptures above all else, even their own lives.

What God accomplished through the personal qualities and joint efforts of Martin Luther, and to a large degree many German princes cannot be understated. It is parallel to young King Josiah of Judah discovering a neglected copy of the law in the temple. Previous kings had put aside God's Word and had turned to idols.

In the centuries prior to 1500, the darkness of vain idolatrous doctrines of men had come over the church like a black cloud. The head of the church exalted himself above God and above all the Bible's teaching of forgiveness through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

God would not allow the gates of hell to destroy his church. God called an angel, a messenger, "and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth – to every nation, tribe, language and people." We may properly apply John's vision to **Luther- Called by God to Restore the Gospel**. Luther was called by God for the work of the Reformation. Luther taught nothing else than the everlasting gospel.

Martin Luther was 33 years old on October 31, 1517. What had put him in a position to suggest in 95 theses, or statements, a debate in the church against the sale of indulgences? An indulgence cleansed the stain of sins that remained on a sinner's record. The indulgence released the sinner from having to pay for them in purgatory.

Luther's call by the church put him in that position. First a monk, then a priest, then a doctor of theology, then a university professor, Martin finally became also a parish priest. The church had called Luther to teach allegiance to the papacy and to his church. The church also gave Luther the authority to teach the Word of God. It was Luther's study of God's Word that began the Lutheran Reformation.

Luther often appealed to his call when the church tried to silence him. They had called him to study, to teach, and to preach God's Word publicly. When Luther became a professor, they told him, "We give you authority to teach the Word of God." As Luther did those things, he saw that many doctrine and practices in the church, like the purchase of the forgiveness sins and the earning of the forgiveness of sins through penance and good works, were at odds with the Holy Scriptures. The preacher and professor, faithful first to those Scriptures, pointed out those errors.

Martin Luther did not start out as a sneak, or some peasant off the street who took it on himself to expose the human ordinances and traditions that had buried the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The authorities in the church had appointed Luther to his offices. Luther took to heart the authorities command to search the Scripture.

Authority is not the same as ability. Luther was called by God for the work of the Reformation. God called Dr. Martin Luther not unlike he had called the shepherd boy, David, to be his instrument for the good of the church. God chose this 16th Century David not only for the man he was but gave Luther the ability to be the man God would make him.

Luther had deep insight into his own corruption. So when this student of the Word discovered that the righteousness of Christ was not law that condemned him, but the gospel that saved him, this living knowledge threw open the doors of heaven. God also equipped the young pastor with extraordinary gifts that propelled the work of the Reformation; an eloquent knowledge of the Bible's original languages, a heroic faith that stood on Holy Scripture alone, and the spirit of self-denial.

God also held his protecting hand over this warrior. God stood at his side even as Luther's enemies sought his life. He did not fear. Luther said "If I had a hundred heads, I would gladly lose them all for the Word of God."

With that deep sense of God's call, Luther made the most of it. Luther taught nothing else than the everlasting gospel.

St. John saw the day in the New Testament era when the everlasting good news that through Jesus Christ alone we can go to the Father would expose the false doctrines and practices of men. "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." Judgment has come against those who oppose Christ and set themselves up above God. It is not Luther or the Lutheran Church that expose falsehood that leads souls to destruction by calling on them to trust in themselves. It is the Bible, especially the eternal gospel that God's angels, messengers, carry to the ends of the earth.

Luther's Reformation was a Bible-Reformation. The Christianity he preached was a Bible-Christianity. The church he contended for was a Bible-church. The Lutheran Reformation has poured out torrents of truth and life from the Bible that flow over the people on earth's continents. The Bible is the source of truth and life. God's Word is our great heritage.

No, we do not worship Dr. Martin Luther. Let the world slander and speak falsely against us. It is a terrible contradiction though to say on the one hand, "God called Martin Luther and we thank God," and then on the other hand turn away from God's Word and deny the Reformation by attacking God's Word with our own reason and our own desires.

Orthodox and false doctrines are not determined by different interpretations of the Bible. Orthodoxy is the result of loving and trusting God's Word. False teaching is the result of rejecting God's Word and following human reason and one's own desires instead.

Be faithful and continue in the old, approved, and trustworthy truth of God for the welfare and salvation of your souls. Be steadfast and immovable until death. Never worship Martin Luther or any other human being but as regards Luther do follow Hebrews 13:7, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider their way of life and imitate their faith." Amen. <SDG>