

How the Church Needs Reformation Today

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HOST: David Wheaton:

How the Church Needs Reformation Today. That is the topic we'll discuss today, right here on the Christian Worldview Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical world view of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a listener supported radio program. Our website is thechristianworldview.org and the rest of our contact information will be given throughout today's program.

Last week on the program, guest Mike Gendron joined us to discuss the topic Remembering the Reformation and the War Against It Today. Mike explained why the Reformation was necessary, because the Roman Catholic Church had so departed from the faith and doctrines of the first century church, and what the Reformation accomplished including the Word of God recovered as supreme authority, Christ as head of His church, and all important doctrine such as justification by God's grace alone, through faith alone, apart from human merit.

This week, as we approach the anniversary of Reformation Day, which is October 31, 1517, the date when German monk Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany to protest the errant doctrines and abuses of the dominant Roman Catholic Church in which then ignited a 130 year period of reform that forever altered the Christian faith in western civilization, we will continue our focus on the Reformation by discussing how the church needs reformation today.

Joel Beeke, pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregations in Grand Rapids, Michigan, founder of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and chairman of Reformation Heritage Books joins us to explain how the church and ristians individually should apply truths recovered in the Reformation to preaching and living. We'll also be offering a book edited by Joel Beeke, titled *The Beauty and Glory of the Reformation*, which will better acquaint you with the men and the women of the Reformation and how they believed and lived out those five solas, scripture alone, grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone, all for the glory of God alone. We'll tell you how you can order that book today.

Now, just one more question before we begin with Joel Beeke. Why focus on the Reformation, a period of time which took place hundreds of years ago, when a major national election is fast approaching? We have done many programs on this election over the last couple of months. If you've missed those, go to our program archives at thechristianworldview.org. While this election and the future of our country is very important, what took place in the Reformation, particularly theologically, recovering key doctrines of the faith, continues to be eternally significant far beyond any election.

Frankly, the Democrats and Kamala Harris's platform is anti-Reformation and anti-Christian at its core. It's anti-God. It's a perversion of scripture. It's big government instead of a big God. Now, Trump is no Christian hero, of course, but at least he holds to a semblance of the influence that the Reformation has had on this country.

Next week, we'll talk more about the election. Today, Joel Beeke will give insight about how a pastor should treat current events. But for now, let's focus on what this modern day, son of the Reformation, Joel Beeke, has to say about a wide range of issues.

Joel, thank you so much for coming on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. I look back in our archives and it's been exactly two years since you were last on the program. For new listeners today, or for those who may not remember, could you remind us how God brought you to saving faith in His Son and what your life is like now?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

Great to be with you again, David. I was brought up in a very conservative, godly home with very special parents who love the Lord. I was brought under severe conviction of sin when I was 14, then wonderfully delivered in Christ when I was 15, which brought overwhelming joy into my life. Actually, I got my dad out of bed at 3:00 in the morning and told him I was saved and my sins were washed away. Unforgettable night.

I was called to the ministry when I was 16. That was a very powerful internal calling and God confirmed it a number of ways. I was accepted in my denomination at that point. I was 21 after completing most of college. Then I served three churches in my life, one in Sioux Center, Iowa, one in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, and one here in Grand Rapids. I've been in Grand Rapids now for 38 years.

Basically, I do three major things in Grand Rapids. I started a seminary. I started a book ministry called Reformation Heritage Books and I'm a pastor, as well. I pastor 700 people with a few other men. My main role, however, though, is at the seminary and doing conferences and spreading the Word. We started the seminary with four students and now we have 500 some. It's been a wonderful, wonderful task. I'm very grateful for this last half century of service to the Lord.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Yeah. It was really good for my wife and son and I to come and see you this summer on our trip home from the Arc Encounter and Creation Museum. We drove up through Michigan and heard you preach twice on a Sunday there at Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids. By the way, we have links to all that pastor Joel Beeke just mentioned with Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and all the ministry work he's involved with at our website, thechristianworldview.org. Go there and you can find links to all of the things he just discussed.

Joel, you wrote a very compelling, it was actually from a chapter from a book, the fourth volume of Reformed Systematic Theology and the title is, The Church is Calling, Her Reformation Needed Today. You say, "What is reformation? The word means changing something for the better according to some standard because it has become defective or failed to attain its purpose. We use the word reformed of the church because Christ formed His church by His word. It was deformed by human teachings and customs, and Christ is reforming it again by His word."

So what are the primary ways, Joel, that you see, let's say be more specific, Bible believing or Bible preaching churches, evangelical churches, let's say, have been deformed in our age. How did that happen?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

When Bible believing churches are deformed, what they're doing is, they're generally speaking, watering down what the Word says and minimizing the antithetical character of the church to the world. In other words, they gradually become more like the world. You've probably heard the joke, the church is just like the world. It just takes them 10 years longer to get there. Because often what happens is, there's so many pressures on preachers and churches to follow the world's ways, that the church is often tempted to abandon scripture's clear teaching and become more like the world. Whether it be in entertainment, whether it be on interpersonal relationships or just think of homosexuality. There's no way you can read the Bible and say that God is supportive of this. Yet, churches will follow society in five, 10 years after homosexuality's accepted, you started seeing churches saying, "Well, we accept this. It's not a sin. You can even have homosexual office bearers," and so on.

So whenever the church abandons the scriptures, the clear teaching of the scriptures, and tries to act more like the world or entertain like the world, the church loses its "churchiness." It loses its saltiness. It loses its being light of the hill and salt in the earth and it starts to abandon scripture. So it does lip service to scripture. A lot of churches today really have abandoned Genesis 1 through 3. They don't even believe in the historicity of Adam. Well, if Adam wasn't a real person, how do you make sense of Romans 5, where Christ and Adam are set up as the two representatives heads of the human race?

So once we start abandoning scripture to fulfill a kind of worldly acceptance, or maybe even a scientific acceptance, then the church is no longer the church and she needs to be reformed again.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Joel Beeke is our guest today here on the Christian Worldview talking about how the church needs reformation today. Joel, let's go through some of the points you bring out in this chapter, how reformation can take place in a church. You write, "I will speak first of reformation by preaching God's sovereignty." That's the first point. Second of reformation by changing church ministry and third of reformation by renewing personal piety.

We're going to try to cover those three elements in our conversation today. I'm going to start out with the first one on God's sovereignty. You write, "Reformation requires us to boldly proclaim the doctrines of the Bible precisely at those points where the world most fiercely attacks it. The great and pervasive message of the Bible is God's sovereignty, that the Lord is God and is executing His eternal decree by His Son, Jesus Christ." You go on to say, "For the sake of reformation, ministers must preach God's sovereignty as Creator, Law Giver, and Savior."

Now, Joel, some would say that really, the major problem in the church, and you may have alluded to this already earlier, saying that the methodology of the church needs to change. We need to tweak the music. We need to have more programs for everyone who walks in the door. There's a place for everyone to belong in a program. Maybe the setting of the sanctuary needs to change and we need to have greeters in the parking lot. They'd focus on these things as saying that that's the beginning of reformation for our church. So why does reformation actually start with preaching God's sovereignty actually as Creator?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

Because the Bible starts there. In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. The Bible, from the get go of Genesis 1:1 all the way through Revelation 22 is setting up God as the great sovereign Lord to whom we must bow. We can't change God into our image, which is the problem with so many churches today, but we have to be changed into His image and we have to obey Him.

So the sovereignty of God as Father is absolutely critical. When God says, in Genesis 1 and 2 that He created all things, and this was not billions and billions and billions of years ago, but He created all things and then made man in His image from the dust of the Earth, He means what He says. We need to see ourselves the way the Bible portrays us to be.

We were created in God's image as prophets, priests, and kings. We were created in knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness, but we fell from that. That also is related to God's sovereignty, but it's our fault. We fell, in Adam, and God comes now as the sovereign lawgiver and imprints those Ten Commandments on our hearts, actually inscribes them in the scriptures, and shows us how to live. But we break those laws and so then God as a sovereign gospel giver and talks to us about salvation in Jesus Christ, which we are to receive by faith alone.

Those basics of the gospel, God is sovereign Lord over all things, and our dependency upon Him and our submission to Him, both to His law and to His gospel, these are fundamental rules and guidelines about how to live in this world. Today, much of modern man, many of the churches don't want to hear anything about this. They turn scripture into saying what they want it to say and they mythologize much of the other scriptures that are so plain and say, "We'll believe what we want to believe."

Faithful churches believe in the infallible, inerrant Word of God and we take seriously the whole of scripture. A whole Bible makes a whole Christian.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Joel Beeke of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary is our guest, discussing how the church needs reformation today. We are offering a book with today's program, titled *The Beauty and Glory of the Reformation*. It's 208 pages, hard cover, and retails for \$25. You can receive the book as a thank you from us when you become a Christian Worldview Partner of any amount.

If you already are a Christian Worldview Partner, you will automatically be sent this book. If you're not, you can purchase it for \$20, which is a 20% discount off the retail price. Just go to our website, thechristianworldview.org, call us toll free 1-888-646-2233, or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. We'll pause briefly to tell you about some other ministry resources and updates. Stay tuned. Much more coming up. I'm David Wheaton and you are listening to the Christian Worldview Radio Program.

HOST: David Wheaton

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website, thechristianworldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly e-mail and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Our topic today is *How the Church Needs Reformation Today*. Our guest is Pastor Joel Beeke of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan and also of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

You say, "To guard the doctrines of grace and honor our Savior, we must preach the five solas of the 16th century Reformation. Though 500 years have passed since days of Lutheran and Calvin, these five principles remain the engine that drives true reformation and empowers the authentically evangelical church." So Joel, for someone listening today who hasn't heard the gospel, or for someone who needs to understand it better, could you explain how a pastor should explain the gospel in terms of the five solas of the Reformation?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

First of all, you have *Sola Scriptura*, which means Scripture alone. God's scriptures are rule to direct our faith, to direct our obedience, and to direct our worship. It's not so that, as Rome taught it in Reformation days, that yeah, scripture's there, but the Pope also has equal authority. No, there's only one authority base. That's the scripture. And the church gets its authority from the scripture. It doesn't have its own authority inherently. That means that a faithful church, to preach the gospel, must be absolutely faithful to the scriptures. Every preacher in every sermon must herald what the scriptures say and must apply it to the lives of people.

That leads, secondly, when we see our sinfulness, to the need for Sola Gratia, which simply means we're saved by grace alone. It's only in our fallen state in Adam, your wisdom has become darkness, your righteousness has become depravity, and your power has become death. Only divine intervention can save us. We're sinners and God cannot admit sinners into Heaven. We need a substitute to take our place. That substitute has to do for us what we can't do for ourselves.

Which leads to the third sola, which is Solus Christus. We're saved by Christ alone. Christ does for us the two things in the gospel, this is the heart of the gospel, the two things for us that we cannot do for ourselves. We need someone to be Almighty God to take our place to give infinite value to His satisfaction. We need someone who can pay for all our sins, who can suffer and die on our behalf and was not a sinner himself and can have infinite value. Well, only God can have infinite value and satisfaction. So our Savior must be God, but He must also suffer in our nature, which is to be a man.

So Christ came and suffered and died to save us just as we are and to make us new creations in Him by wiping away our sins through His suffering obedience. As John Calvin said, "When we are justified by God and really saved, we don't only need the suffering obedience of Jesus," sometimes called passive obedience, coming from the Latin word *passio*, which means to suffer. We also need His active obedience to the law so that He fulfills the law completely. That is to say, He loved God above all every second of His 33-year-old life. He loved His neighbors, Himself every second of His 33-year-old life. He's without original sin, being immaculately conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He's without any actual sin. So He is fully sinless, fully has obeyed the law so that we can earn the right to eternal life through His obedience.

Now, Sola Fide, the fourth alone word, by faith alone means that when we, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in us, believe in this Christ and believe in this double obedience alone to save us, at that moment you see, when the Holy Spirit works that faith within us, then that double obedience is imputed to us. As Romans 3 says so plainly, "God is just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." We are justified because our sins are wiped away and we have a right to eternal life and we are saved when we truly believe in Him alone for salvation. We don't have faith in our faith, so faith in itself doesn't save us, but faith is the instrument that saves us in Christ. It's like if I have a glass of water in front of me and I have a straw in it, through the straw, I get the water in my mouth. Faith is that straw. It's the means by which we receive Christ, but it's not our salvation itself. Only Christ is our salvation.

Once we're saved in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, based on scripture alone, we will then give glory to God alone, *solus deo gloria*. We just want to glorify Him in our total life. That's one mark of how we know we're saved. We no longer live for ourselves. We still stumble. We still sin, of course, but the trajectory of our life is Christ. We can say then with Paul, "For me to live is Christ. I want God, through Christ, to be glorified in all three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." That's the gospel. I learn to love Him as a Trinitarian God.

I can say with one reformer, Sammy Rutherford, "I know not which divine person I love the most, but this I know. I love each of them and I need them all," and we become, may I say it strongly, God obsessed, God directed, God controlled, loving God. We become God centered. We want to live unto Him. We want to serve Him. We want to fear Him. We want to worship Him. We love Him because He first loved us. That is biblical Christianity. That is reformation Christianity.

Now, Roman Catholic Church believed in all five of these things, but not the Word alone. A man is saved by faith and by his own works. It's the glory of God, and it's the glory of the Pope, and the leaders. It's by grace and by works. It's by Christ and it's by other people you can pray to, like Mary. But the reformers said, "No, no, no. None of that is in the Bible. The Bible is solidly adhering, on every page, to these five solas, which is the gospel."

HOST: David Wheaton:

Well, thank you for explaining that. The gospel is so profound and yet so simple, easy to understand, and I just loved hearing that explanation of how the five solas so accurately describe the gospel we find in scripture. Joel Beeke is our guest today here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. He is the pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He's also the chancellor and professor of systematic theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He was the former president there for a couple of decades, at least. You can find out more about him by going to our website, thechristianworldview.org or going to his direct website, joelbeeke.org, and Beeke is spelled B-E-E-K-E.

Our topic is How the Church Needs Reformation Today. Let's transition from the first aspect of reformation for the church by preaching God's sovereignty as Creator, as Lawgiver, as Savior, as you just said in the gospel, in the five solas to the second point you had in this chapter was, reformation by changing church ministry. You write, "The Reformation of the 16th century was not merely a change in doctrine, as we've been discussing, but a change in how the church ordered itself and did its work."

You write several different practices of the church that were distinctive back at that time that you think we need to have in our churches today. I'm just going to go over a couple of them. Let's start out with prayer. You say, "Churches need to renew their prayer meetings. How much we pray shows what we really believe about how much we need God's grace. In too many churches, the prayer meeting has declined into a few old people praying for a few sick people. Ministers should press upon all members of the church the importance of participating in corporate prayer."

The church's shepherd's, the leaders should lead the prayer meeting with a distinctly spiritual and eternal focus. While petitions may certainly be lifted up for medical and financial needs, the priority of the prayer meeting, following the pattern of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 should be that people honor God's holy

name. They seek the transforming power of His kingdom and become doers of His will on Earth as it is in Heaven."

Prayer seems like an obvious one, Joel, but I think it's a big neglected means of grace and practice of the church. Why are we so weak on prayer? What changes our hearts, Joel, on being much more earnest in prayer?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

I'm thinking of John Bunyan right now when you ask me that question. John Bunyan said, "You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you can't do more than pray until you've prayed." In other words, he's saying, as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5, "We must pray without ceasing," such that we have our stated times of prayer each day privately, in our families, but also each week in the church. But then we also have what the reformers and especially the puritans called occasional praying. That is spontaneous prayers that just flow from us.

What you find so often in the reformers and puritans and in times of revival is that prayer becomes the heartbeat of the believer. It's the thermometer of the spiritual life. So the believer is constantly at the throne of grace. If I'm going to do a task, if I'm going to prepare say a catechism class right here in my study, the very first thing I must do is get down on my knees and cry out to God for help. Or if you're a mom and you get up in the morning, and you know you're going to take care of your kids today, the very first thing you should do is say, "Lord, help me. Help me in all my child-rearing today to reflect the image of Christ and to live to Thy glory. Give me the patience I need," and so on.

The problem today is that prayer has been pushed to the back burner. It's marginalized. It's marginalized in church worship services. I've been preaching to many churches and some of them, honestly, they don't spend more than five minutes in prayer the whole service long. Others still do spend 20, 30 minutes in prayer. That's wonderful. But prayer is a primary part of our church life. It's a primary part of our personal life. It should be a primary part in family worship every day.

Well, you take the typical Christian family today, they don't even know they're supposed to be doing family worship. For the reformers and puritans, this was staple. This was a fundamental means of grace you did every day. You always read the Bible with your family every day. The father would explain the two or three major takeaways from the chapter. You'd talk about it with your kids and then you'd pray over it earnestly, not for 30 seconds, "Lord, bless this food and drink. Thank Thee for the flowers today and the sunshine. Amen." No, no. Earnestly pray the ACTS formula. A for adoration. You adore God in the presence of your family. You C, confess your sins. T, you express your thanksgivings in deep and spiritual ways as well as for things big and small, and then S, your supplications.

So in church, if you use that ACTS formula, if in family you use that ACTS formula, if in your own private life you use that ACTS formula then you're earnest about prayer and prayer is not just a little appendix you add at the end of your life, like at the end of a book like an appendix, but prayer is the foundation of your life. It's like Martin Luther said to his right hand man, Philip Melanchthon, one time. He said, "Philip, I have so much to do tomorrow I need to spend an extra hour in prayer."

What do we do when we're very busy? We hurry through our prayer. We just don't understand what it means to wrestle with God in prayer, to take hold of God, as God speaks of it, in prayer in Isaiah 64:7, and to plead with him that the Heavens would be rent and He would come down and send revival upon us, and upon our churches, upon our families. We're living today in a crazy, insane society that is conflicting with the Word of God at every juncture and we desperately need the Holy Spirit to come down and revive us.

When you look at prayer meetings, that's probably the most depressing thing in the church of anything. Our churches should be filled with people crying out to God to have mercy upon America and upon our churches and upon our world and upon our families. We need Him desperately.

HOST: David Wheaton:

We do and what an important exhortation you're giving us. Joel Beeke with us today on The Christian Worldview. I'm just going to insert this as a followup because it jogged my memory that when we attended your church in July on Sunday, it was the day after there was an assassination attempt on former President Trump in Pennsylvania. You were preaching in Kalamazoo, Michigan at another church in the morning. We went there. Then we came to your own church that evening and heard you preach the Sunday service. Both times, Joel, in your pastoral prayer, which was a part of the service, where there was a significant prayer time, you prayed for the former president. Your sermons were not overtly political at all.

But how do you think a pastor should pray for, or maybe even explain, or perhaps directly preach on issues that have both theological and political connection? Whether the issue of abortion, homosexuality, transgender. These issues that are hot button issues in our society. Lots of pastors and preachers stay away from those things. They certainly don't pray about them. They don't touch on them. They may even preach expositively, which is wonderful. But it seems like the culture around us has things going on that the shepherd needs to be addressing. What are your thoughts on that, Joel?

All right, Joel Beeke will answer that question after this short pause to tell you about some ministry resources and updates. By the way, we're offering a book with today's program titled The Beauty and Glory of Reformation. You can receive the book when you become a Christian Worldview Partner of any amount. If you already are, you'll receive it automatically. If you're not a Christian Worldview Partner, you can purchase it for \$20, which is a 20% discount. It's 208 pages hardcover and retails for \$25. Just get in contact with us the

usual ways and all our contact information will be given during this break. We have much more coming up with Joel Beeke. I'm David Wheaton and you are listening to The Christian Worldview radio program.

HOST: David Wheaton

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website, thechristianworldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly e-mail and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Our topic today is How the Church Needs Reformation Today. Our guest is Pastor Joel Beeke of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan and also of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

Joel, when we visited your church this summer, we noticed how you led your congregation in prayer for President Trump and his family and our nation the day after the assassination attempt on him in Pennsylvania. Bringing it back to the Reformation and the example they set, how should a pastor explain, pray for, directly preach on, issues that are theological, moral, and political?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

Can you imagine a prophet of the Old Testament or an apostle of the New Testament, if something huge was happening in society, that they just ignored it? That wouldn't be right. Jesus spoke about the Tower of Siloam that fell on people and made an application. He spoke about all kinds of things that were happening in His own day.

But there's three approaches, basically, to be used here, to answer your question directly. One approach is to become very political in your preaching, which then takes away the emphasis on the gospel. We're to be specialists in the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The focus must be on the gospel. That approach is wrong. The opposite extreme, in which we ignore everything that's going on in society and never preach, for example, about homosexuality or other moral issues, that's also wrong.

I've wrestled with this a lot in my life, David, what I should say, what I shouldn't say and I've come down in the middle position, which is to say the church has everything to do with God's Word. There are moral principles in the scripture. When society violates those principles, the church must sound a bugle alarm against those violations. Jesus preached about them constantly. Look in the Sermon on the Mount. A lot of it was about the law. "You've heard it said to you that thou shall not commit adultery. I say to you who even looks upon a man commits adultery already in his heart." He talked about not saying to other people, "You are a fool," because you're actually killing your brother.

So we need to address moral issues. Now, abortion. Let's just take that. Is that a moral issue? Well, of course, it is. Sixth commandment, thou shall not kill. We're killing one million people, David, every year. We're a

barbaric nation. This is an abomination in the sight of God. Every one of those babies, I don't care if that baby's only one day old in the womb, that is a baby. That is a real, living human baby.

Oh, yes, we're told that mothers, mothers can do with their bodies what they want. Where in the world does the Bible say that? The Bible says you should treat your body as the image of Christ and besides, the child in the womb is a separate human being and therefore, they have no right to kill that human being. In fact, the Bible says you could be charged with manslaughter if you did something to a woman that caused her to miscarry a child in the book of Deuteronomy. So this is a very, very serious business when we condone abortion at any time, even at three weeks, much less 15 weeks. We must speak out clearly on these issues.

Now, that doesn't mean that we do this every single week and that we keep beating these drums all the time. No. Our primary emphasis is on personal salvation, on the gospel, on preaching to the lost, preaching to the saved, growing the saints in their most holy faith. Of course, that's the primary emphasis of the Bible. So the minister must always preach this text, but woe be to the minister who never speaks up about moral issues that are destroying the nation and the world.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Amen to that. Pastor Joel Beeke is our guest today here on The Christian Worldview radio program. He is the pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We have links to all his work, the publishing house that he leads at our website, thechristianworldview.org.

Joel, in this chapter where you talk about reformation by changing church ministry, there's several points and we can't get into all of them. I wish we could. But the fifth point you make here is that churches need to cultivate spiritual worship that comes from the heart. The church is always in danger of sliding into formalism in which an external form of religion replaces the power of a living faith. You go on to say churches with a reputation for life and activity may actually be dead. Public worship can become, as John Calvin said it, "a theatrical performance rather than a means for leading us by the hand to Christ." New Testament worship is an empty shell without hearts that are transformed by the gospel.

It seems to me you're describing two ditches here. There's a ditch of formalism on one side, where you have all your doctrine tied up in a bow and the I's are dotted and the T's are crossed and you have really sound doctrine. It can turn into a formalism. The other side of the road, in that ditch, there's a ditch of emotionalism where you're just trying to stimulate an experience, a response, and make people feel a certain way when they come to church.

How do you foster a spiritual worship from the heart? What does that actually mean and how do you achieve that?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

I wrote a whole book of 450 pages on it called Reformed Preaching, that we must not just inform the mind, but we must also reach the heart, which in turn will reach the hands and the feet. Because what preaching is in the Bible, what preaching is in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles is preaching that reaches the whole man. If we just do cerebral preaching, we end up with cerebral believers who go on their way and live their life the way they want to.

But when the Word of God takes hold of us and we're impacted in the depths of our soul and we're changed and made new creations, that penetrates the innermost recesses of the individual and it produces what the Bible calls the fear of the Lord, the childlike fear of the Lord. Which obviously, over and over again the Bible says, is the beginning of wisdom. You can have all this theological knowledge. Just think of many professors at many secular universities today. They actually know their Bible pretty well, many of them, but they mock with it. It hasn't penetrated their heart and they're pouring poison into the minds and lives of young people.

But what the church needs today is preaching that informs the mind, convicts the conscious, bends the will, and allures the heart so that the whole man worships the triune God with all that is within me. That's what produces this kind of personal piety. How churches today and the world today actually degrade piety. Piety is actually a very sacred thing. The word for piety in the New Testament is godliness and the word for piety in the Old Testament is the fear of the Lord. These are things God treasures. Piety's another one of those very precious things, one of the most precious things in life that the world just throws into mockery. It jokes with marriage. It jokes with God and His name. It jokes with piety.

We need God exalting, man abasing, Bible faithful piety that we want to do what God wants us to do. John Calvin, when he wrote his institutes as the main textbook of the Reformation, he said right in the preface, "There's only one reason I wrote this book. Not to just increase your knowledge and your mind, but to form you into a believer by the grace of the spirit who's growing in piety."

HOST: David Wheaton:

That is the whole point of the Christian life. Once you've been justified, is sanctification and piety and I'm so glad you brought that out. There's a real lack for that. I look at my own life as well. I'm not criticizing others. That needs to be the directive for me, personally, in my own life is piety and sanctification.

Now we've gone, Joel, from the need for reformation in the church by number one, preaching God's sovereignty as Creator, Lawgiver, and Savior to number two, reformation by changing church ministry and number three, and you touched on it just a bit already, reformation by renewing personal piety. To yearn for and to pursue through God's grace and His Spirit and the Word greater personal sanctification.

I just want to close with one more question on this idea of personal piety. You write, "The greatest obstacle to reformation is the inertia of indifference. People don't care and consequently, they don't think about or work toward change. To be zealous is to be inflamed. Not with pride and sinful anger, but with love and holy energy to do God's will." Then you quote J. C. Ryle, "A zealous man in religion is preeminently a man of one thing. He sees only one thing. He cares for one thing. He lives for one thing. He is swallowed up in one thing and that one thing is to please God."

One thing I've noticed and I've actually been familiar with you for many years, probably 20 years, Joel. I saw you preach at a conference in the South way back when and you've been on the program a couple of times over the years and connected with you again this summer. One thing I've noticed about you is, you are very serious about sound doctrine and being a shepherd of the sheep, and all of the things that go into soundness, orthodoxy. Yet, you have this joy, this passion, this zealousness. I'll even say a smile on your face that sometimes is not associated with someone who takes sound doctrine so seriously. What's your exhortation to those of us listening today to be inflamed with this one thing, to please God?

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

Bottom line, only the Holy Spirit can give that to us because, by nature, we don't have it. Also the bottom line is, the Holy Spirit is willing to give it to poor, lost, Hell worthy sinners. But yes, for the reformers and the puritans, and of course, for Paul himself in the New Testament and others, this is the only way to live. We were created for one purpose, to glorify God. If we're not zealous about that, whatever we're zealous about, we're putting above God. So if you're a dad and you get more excited about the score of some ballgame than you do about talking to your children about Jesus Christ, you better ask the question, "What kind of Christianity do I have?"

This is exactly what we have all throughout America today, all kinds of nominal Christianity that's not zealous for God. Puritans said, "You've got to be a white-hot flame for the Lord." You want to see God glorified. You want to see all your children saved, your neighbors saved. You can't hold back from speaking. If you have assurance of faith that you're a Christian, you see every unconverted person as a mission field. You long to evangelize. You're excited to bring the gospel to people. You want to find a way to talk to them about the one thing needful in life. If you found what life is all about, you got to share it with other people. This is a burning issue.

So yes, it doesn't mean you're not truly happy and joyful. I can honestly say by the grace of God, I'm a very, very happy person. But I'm happy in the Lord because He's my Savior and I'm happy that I can serve Him and spread His Word. I'm happy that I have a wonderful wife at my side who loves God as well. There's no joy in marriage like the joy of seeing eye to eye on spiritual things with your wife and praying together and loving God together and weeping together and rejoicing together. I love my wife like crazy. I could never love her half this much if she weren't a zealous Christian.

So in every area of life, this zeal for God is at the very core of what life is all about. Take away God from my life and I'm just an empty shell. I'm completely dependent on Him. I need Him. Without Jesus, I could do nothing. So this is how we have to live. We have to live in God, by God, to God, through God, out of God so that God is the center of our lives. That's what the Reformation's all about, a theocentricity, a God-centeredness. He must increase. I must decrease. That gives me joy. That gives every true Christian joy.

HOST: David Wheaton:

We love your joy, Joel, and we love your zealousness. We're so thankful for what God has worked in your willing life. So praise God for that. Thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview Radio Program today. We wish all of God's best and grace to you and Mary and your church and all you're doing in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

GUEST: Joel Beeke:

Thank you so much, David.

HOST: David Wheaton:

We hope your faith in world view was sharpened and, as Joel said, inflamed by hearing him today talk about the Reformation. Again, we have links to his church, seminary, publishing house, and his books at our website, thechristianworldview.org. While you're there, be sure to order the book we are offering with today's program, *The Beauty and Glory of the Reformation*, which is edited by our guest, Joel Beeke. It's 208 pages and hardcover. You can receive the book as a thank you when you become a Christian Worldview Partner of any amount. If you already are a Christian Worldview Partner, you will automatically be sent it. If you're not, you can purchase it for \$20, which is a 20% discount off the \$25 retail price. Just get in contact with us the usual ways. All our contact information is given immediately after today's program.

Just one more word about the Reformation. Those who led it weren't inspired like the New Testament writers. We're not saying we're right, but we would differ with some of their theology, like on eschatology. But on the primary issues of the faith, tier one, the five solas, they recovered these key doctrines from scripture and did great things for the Christian faith and Western Civilization.

Thank you for joining us today on The Christian Worldview Radio Program and for your support of this nonprofit radio ministry. Let's remember that scripture alone is our authority and that we're saved and sanctified by God's grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone, and all for the glory of God alone. Until next time, Think biblically, Live accordingly, and Stand firm!

The mission of The Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical world view of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript, or find out "What Must I Do To Be Saved?" go to

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