

**I. Two Objectives**

**A. Two Objectives**

1. Answer the question: Why should the reformation matter to someone sitting in a seat at Cornerstone Community Church 500 year later.
2. Answer the question: What difference does Paul's instructions to the Corinthian Christians about Christian unity make to someone sitting in a seat at Cornerstone Community Church nearly 2000 years later?

**B. The Story of Hellen Stirke: The Story of the Ordinary Virgin (By Tony Reinke)**

1. The Story
  - a. The drama of the Protestant Reformation casts big personalities and major characters, the types of men now etched into myths, legends, and giant stone figures. But the Reformation is also the story of everyday, ordinary followers of Christ, mostly forgotten, who lived out Reformation theology on the ground — and who paid the price for it with their lives. Martyrs like Hellen Stirke.
  - b. Hellen was a fairly average Scottish Christian in the city of Perth, dedicated to daily domestic work as a wife and mother. Her life remained unnoticed to history until the birth of her last child in 1544.
  - c. When the time arrived for Hellen's labor and delivery, Catholic tradition called for earnest prayers to the Virgin Mary. Having a good sense of Scripture, Hellen repudiated these petitions. It was a tradition she would not follow. Her baffled midwives pressed her to make such a prayer, but she refused the ritual. The physical risk was real, but the prayers were nothing more than superstitious insurance.
  - d. "If I had lived in the days of the Virgin," Hellen said with poise, "God might have looked likewise to my humility and base estate, as he did the Virgin's, and might have made me the mother of Christ." Her childbed sermonette must have triggered gasps. But Hellen was settled and comforted by her theology, knowing her prayers were going directly to God through her Savior Jesus Christ.
  - e. News of Hellen's refusal to pray to Mary, and her bold claim that she was on equal standing before God, very soon found its way to the ears of the local Catholic clergy and quickly up the chain to the presiding cardinal. His response was swift to snuff out this spark of Protestant theology. Before long, Hellen was arrested and imprisoned, along with her husband and four other outspoken Protestants in the city. The small group was soon found guilty of "heresy" and sentenced to death. The following day, soldiers brought Hellen, her husband, and the condemned Protestants to the

gallows.

- f. Hellen asked to die side by side with her husband, James Finlason, but her request was denied. Men were to be hanged, women drowned, and James would go first. Holding her young child in her arms, Hellen approached her husband, kissed him, and gave him these parting words: “Husband, be glad, for we have lived together many joyful days, and this day, in which we must die, we ought to esteem the most joyful of all, because we shall have joy forever. Therefore I will not bid you good night, for we shall shortly meet in the kingdom of heaven.”
- g. James was hanged before her eyes. His life on earth done, eyes fell to Hellen, who was forced to hand her newborn to a nurse entrusted with the child’s care from this point. The authorities led Hellen to a nearby pond, bound her hands and feet, put her into a large gunnysack along with stones or weights, and threw her into the water like a bag of garbage. All for the crime of “blaspheming the Virgin Mary.”
- h. Heaven has all the details, but this is all we know of Hellen’s life. She was a bold woman made strong by Scripture. Her birthbed claim, that she was equally qualified to mother Jesus, was a radical ceremonial insubordination — but at the heart it was an act of faith, rendering the strata of all human superiority irrelevant in the presence of Christ’s supremacy.
- i. Look deeper into the Reformation, and you will see that it’s more than printing presses and theses nailed to doors and theological debates. It’s the story of ordinary believers, husbands and wives and fathers and mothers, poised in the words of Scripture, reclaiming the primacy of Jesus Christ for their lives, their marriages, their families, and their eternal hopes, who stand as a cloud of witnesses calling us to do likewise. They call us to hold our biblical convictions without wavering, to enjoy God’s earthly blessings, and to endure all momentary afflictions now for the great eternal joy set before us.

2. The Point

- a. Hellen Stirke and countless others have found in the pages of God’s word the vital truth that they need no other mediator than Christ.
  - (1) They need no other Savior than Christ.
  - (2) They need no other revelation than the revelation of Christ in the Bible, the word of God.
- b. This is where Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians connects with the Reformation and with us . . .

**C. All are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s**

1. Problem:

- a. Human beings strive to gain through association what they think

- they lack of influence, prestige, power, and opportunity
- b. Reflected in the church as Christians gather around and exalt their favorite Bible teachers over one another
  - (1) Experience vs doctrine
  - (2) The same argument addressed in the Reformation
    - (a) Catholic: all you need is love
    - (b) Reformation: all you need is the word
- 2. Paul waylays the church for taking on worldly strategies of self-promotion
- 3. He brings his entire argument down to this single sentence: All are yours . . . and you are Christ's and Christ is God's
  - a. God's forgiveness of sin is yours in Christ
    - (1) Sin is
      - (a) inevitable
      - (b) separates from God
      - (c) amounts to denying God sovereignty in any area of life
    - (2) Sin deserves death
    - (3) Jesus Christ takes on himself our sin. He bears our sin in His body on the cross. He suffers the full measure of God's justice on all human sin on behalf of those who God sovereignly chooses for salvation.
    - (4) **God forgives not on the basis of works or efforts at holiness, but on the basis of Christ's sinless life and atoning death.**
    - (5) God's forgiveness is yours in Christ
  - b. God's fatherly love and favor is yours in Christ
    - (1) **John 14:23 (ESV) *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.***
    - (2) **John 17:26 (ESV) *I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.***
    - (3) Jesus anticipates that a result of His work in our lives is the proclamation of God, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."
    - (4) **Ephesians 1:5 (ESV) *he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,***
    - (5) **God's fatherly love and favor is yours in Christ**
      - (a) No longer enemies
      - (b) Sons and daughters!
  - c. God's required righteousness is yours in Christ
    - (1) The discovery that transformed the Christian faith: God accounts as righteous those who put their faith in Christ
    - (2) It is not our efforts at personal holiness that justify us or

- make us righteous
- (3) God accepts the righteousness of His Son, (verified by the resurrection of Jesus) and imputes His righteousness to us
  - (4) **God's required righteousness is yours in Christ**
    - (a) God does not require your effort
    - (b) Christ has already made sufficient effort in His life and death
    - (c) God requires of you: faith and in response to faith counts your righteous with Christ's righteousness
  - (5) God settles the debt and bridges the gap that separates us from Him by accepting Christ as the sufficient representative and sacrifice for us all.
    - (a) This truth is a treasure restored by the Reformation
- d. God's generous provision is yours in Christ
- (1) **Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)** *<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*
  - (2) **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)** *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*
  - (3) What need do you have this morning?
    - (a) Broken relationships
    - (b) Grief
    - (c) Sickness
    - (d) Guidance
    - (e) God withholds nothing from His Son or from those whose lives are hidden in Christ with God
  - (4) **God's generous provision is yours in Christ**
4. God has given all we need for life and godliness in Christ
- a. **2 Peter 1:3 (ESV)** *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,*
  - b. No need for personal striving to find justification before God
  - c. This is the defining doctrine of the reformation
    - (1) This is the doctrine that brought the Bible back
    - (2) This is the doctrine that restored faith for millions
    - (3) This is the doctrine
  - d. All I have is Christ, and He is enough.

## II. Respond

### A. With faith

1. God gives faith to trust Christ

### B. With joy

1. Cultural context and life experience may drain joy and delight in the mercies of God
2. But bring to mind again the realities of what we have in Christ and rejoice