

What Is  
Reformed  
Christianity?

*Tony Warren*

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CHRISTIANITY?*

Agape Chapel Ministries  
P.O.Box 59084  
Norwalk, CA 90652 USA  
(Free List of Free Materials)

<http://www.geocities.com/njbibile>

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Christianity. Not according to men's traditions, but according to the Word of God which it is built upon!

... May the Good Lord give us all wisdom to discern Truth.  
AMEN! Peace,

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## What is Reformed Christianity?

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*Reformed*: ri-farmed', a, Corrected, Restored to a good state; having turned from unlawful ways to obey the law; as a reformed criminal; to restore from a bad state, to the previous good state; a rearrangement which brings about a better order of things; (cap) restoring biblical precepts, as pertaining to Protestant Churches, esp. those retaining the tenets of Sovereignty of God, Predestination, and the doctrine of Grace alone, through faith.

The term Reformed or Reformation (as it is used in Christianity), is a historical term which has roots that go back to the early 1500's. It refers to a period of time when the Church underwent a return to faithful doctrines which had become corrupt under a system of authorities of men, orders, ceremonial and ethical regulations, and traditions produced by ecumenical councils. The purpose of the Reformation was to bring the doctrines of the Church back into agreement (thus the word, Reformed) with the truth written in the laws of Holy Scriptures. The anchor of God's Word is the foundation of any true Church. These faithful men of old were convinced that true and faithful worship of God requires a strong rejection of every doctrine which is contrary to His Holy Word! But the Roman Church of the day rejected this principle and held steadfastly to rule of Church hierarchy and traditions of men, over the scriptures and the Church. Noted Theologian Martin Luther understanding the errors in this usurping of authority from God, for all intents and purposes started the Reformation movement in 1517 when he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Roman Church in Wittenberg.

While the Roman Catholic Church held that it's leaders defined scripture, the Faithful of the day in protest of this (thus, they were called Protestant) exhorted all who had an ear to listen, that God's Word alone must be held above all, even rulers in the Church. For they understood clearly the most basic

of Christian truths. That God indeed was above all, and so His word must likewise be above all!

When Luther Came before the royal diet in the city of Worms on April 18, 1521, he spoke quite clearly and boldly of the necessity for the Reformation. He said,

"Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments (since I believe neither the pope nor the councils alone, it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am conquered by the holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the Word of God: I cannot and will not recant any thing against the conscience."

Truth was as simple as the question, "What constitutes the supreme or ultimate authority? the Word of God (scriptures) itself, or leaders and tradition?" It would seem a question for which the answer would be easy, but for the indoctrinated these simple questions are made complicated by necessity. For when men are of a mind to rule over God's Word, they take the obvious, and with clever words of nullification attempt to make it ambiguous. But to the Reformation faithful, the Church was not built upon shaky human traditions sanctioned by men in the laity, but on the solid Rock of the Scriptures, the Holy Word of God alone. What Authority could be higher than God's very own Word? The simple answer that the noble replied with was, None! A simple question deserves a simple answer!

While Reformation Theology teaches unwaveringly the doctrines of Grace alone, it is nevertheless evangelical Christianity, holding to the superiority of the preaching of the gospel message of Salvation over Church ritual, penance, or ceremony. It gives no provision for human merit or atonement by man that would make God his debtor. It holds that the scriptures are the innerrant Word of God, and thus must be the

art. Preachers today teach gospels that tickle the ear, or which cause the hearer to feel good. Lost is the teaching of sound doctrines so that the Church benefits from faithfulness, not feels good in disobedience. We all need to understand that Reformation Christianity is not someone's opinion about a needed change in doctrine, it is the teaching to "follow" the doctrines which are already written in scriptures, and have been for thousands of years.

We are building faithfully on the legacy of the faithful of the Church, which has preceded us. Their studies and conclusions are included in the great historic creeds and confessions, which we effectively use to help guide us in Christian faith. We believe in the usefulness and effectiveness of these creeds, but we understand Clearly that they are subordinate to the Bible. We never place our creeds or confessions above the scriptures, and we recognize they are man-produced documents, which may need to be changed if it is shown that the bible teaches otherwise. The Reformed Church believes that the Holy Spirit has led, and enlightened the Church throughout it's history. We believe that there has been mistakes made by those of the Church (no man is infallible), but the Church perseveres. We take seriously the commands to "Love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves." We believe that the totality of man is to live for the glory of God in every possible way (Ecc. 12:13; 1st Cor. 10:31).

#### **Romans 11:36**

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To whom be Glory forever. Amen!"

Reformed Christianity holds these things dear and will not deviate from that "Christ-centered in all things", philosophy. It is words, which we have hidden in our hearts that we might not sin against Him -Psalms 119:10-11. In short, Reformed Christianity is important, because it is the faithful and true

In fact, the very Greek word "keep" there means to Hold Fast, to Guard against Loss. We're preserving the Word! Yes, we're conservative that we not let it suffer loss. We believe that our attitude towards God should be to faithfully Keep His commandments, that it control all of our thinking, and that it should be evident in our living. We do not seek to change it to agree with the times, or political correctness of society. That's the difference between Reformed Christianity, and other Christian groups. We cannot compromise God's Word for convenience, for humanism, or because it is impoptune. God's Word doesn't Change with time, and neither does it's meaning. It's timeless and it's always applicable.

This Theology teaches that we humble ourselves and exalt God, which has been the objective of the Reformed Church from the beginning. Reformation Theology is important because it recognizes God in His Proper position, and man in his. It Glorifies God, and portrays man "honestly" just the way he is. Not the way that he thinks he is. This is most often illustrated in the acronym T.U.L.I.P.

Total depravity:

Man is in bondage (a Slave) to sin!

Unconditional Election:

Unmerited, totally unconditional Grace, God's favor!

Limited atonement:

Christ died for the sins of His People, not one in vain!

Irresistible Grace:

Whosoever God chooses, and justifies "will" be Saved!

Perseverance of the Saints:

Everlasting life means Salvation eternally!

Scripture cannot be compromised, and the need in the Church today for this return to Reformation (i.e., Biblical) Theology is greater than ever. The preaching of the faithful gospel message honestly, regardless of man's reaction to it, has become a lost

ultimate authority of the Church rather than Church leaders. I.e., it is self evident that following God means following God's Word rather than the words of men, which would be following men. Reformed Christians believe that sinners were Saved from death and given the gift of eternal Life through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nothing else is required. His Life, Death, and Resurrection was what secured our Salvation, and nothing more. No works by man contributes in any way. Our good works are the evidence of God's working, not the reason for our Salvation. These teachings of what the Holy Scriptures testified of, were in direct opposition to the doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church was espousing, and so thus began the division, or schism from the Church of Rome by those who insisted on faithfulness to God's Word. This restoration of the faith in the Word of God, the pillar of the early Church, soon spread throughout Europe and spawned all of what is today's Protestant denominations. This movement back to the faith of the Apostles of the Church became known simply as, "The Reformation!" Led by men like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, the Church broke away in protest of the errors that the Roman Church had fallen into, and began what we call today, Protestantism. Whitefield, Edwards, Spurgeon, Machen, and nearly all the great Christians of the day all carried the banner of Reformation Christianity. This Theology taught that the Saviour of man was Christ alone, which was also known by the latin term (Solo Christo), Saved by God's Grace alone (Sola Gratia), through faith alone (Sola Fide), to the Glory of God alone (Soli Deo Gloria), and that Christianity must hold to doctrines based upon Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura). This is the only way man can avoid being deceived by unrighteous Church teachers or leaders. By the faithful trying the Spirits, the searching of God's Word itself to see if man's words (the congregational leaders) were in agreement with what God Said. This is just as the more noble Bereans did, and were commended of God as being open minded to scripture and more noble (Acts 17:11).

liberalizing of God's Word), and so has fallen out of vogue with today's worldly denominations. Reformed Christians believe in conservative doctrines as they relates to scripture and Christianity (not to be confused with conservative politics, as some do).

A quick check in the dictionary on that word to make sure we all accurately understand it.

**CONSERVATIVE:** kon-serv-a-tive, a. Tending to preserve; Inclined to faithfully preserve existing doctrines, institutions, cultures, things; opposed to radical or arbitrary change; A advocate of caution. One who conserves or has aversion to change; A preservative; --con-serv-a-tive-ly, adv, -- con-serv-a-tive-ness, n.

Exactly! That's what Reformers are with relationship to scripture. That's because All True Christians have a Spirit led tendency to preserve the Word of God faithfully, and "keep" up the existing words of scripture, not rationalizing them away with every new liberal philosophy of society. Morals of society may change, protestant Churches may change, but Reformed Theology does not! We "Keep" scripture faithfully. We have an inward aversion to changing it, for we know it's God's law! So the importance of Reformed Christianity is self evident! It's the doctrine of "keeping" (-1st John 2:3-5) the true beliefs which were restored to the faithful Church of old. It's the preservation of God's Word within our hearts. Being conservative with regards to doctrines (Conserving) was the norm for hundreds of years, and is the nature of "ALL" True believers. We will not remove the ancient landmarks.

#### **Luke 8:15**

"But that on the Good Ground are they, which in a Honest and good heart, having heard the Word Keep it, and bring forth FRUIT with patience."

In Reformed Theology, there are no holy fraternities nor special appointed saints, or orders. We take seriously the scriptures that all believers are Priests and Saints through Christ, and are bidden to full-time Christian service in their various callings. Saints are not Church appointed, they are God appointed! Faithfulness to God is in working to better the Church, for we know that we dwell in a robe of flesh, and until we reach Glory, we can never be satisfied with either ourselves, or the society in which we must toil till He come. We expect struggle and conflict in the pursuit of the things God has given us to do (John 7:7, 16:33, 2nd Timothy 3:12), but we are also convinced that in time there will be the ultimate success of the Church, as God sees fit to give it. Not in man's definition of success, but in God's defining. This is accomplished through evangelizing and faithful adherence of the Church to God's Word. We know that Christ's great commission to the Church to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing and teaching those who believe, is not a suggestion, but a command.

#### **The Fundamental Beliefs of Reformed Christianity**

In our day there are a number of Churches that call themselves Reformed, which in reality are Reformed Churches in "name only". But the basic teachings of God-centered, historical Reformed Christianity remains constant. They do not change with the shifting winds of time, nor with the political or moral climate of society. They stand as strong as the solid Rock of scriptures upon which they are built. The following is the basic guidelines of the doctrines of true Historical Reformed Christianity:

We all accept without question that the 66 books of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, is the Word of God to man (Psalm 119:160).

Arminianism called "Free Will" doctrine (which basically means, I decide, not God). The attempted theft of the Sovereignty of God from Church doctrine is astounding today. People are being taught that God is an idle bystander and they must do all the work of coming. Lost is the understanding that such a doctrine is dishonoring God, supposing that He is having a hard time in His struggle with man, doing His best to try and persuade them to be Christians, but is unable to accomplish what has been His eternal and sovereign purpose from the very beginning. On the contrary, God is not an idle observer of the will of man, and He is not some impotent God who is wringing His hands in futility over that will of man. He is a Sovereign God who "will" have His will be Done. And He will work within us, to get it done (Philippians 2:13, Ephesians 1:11) according to His will, not man's (supposed) free will.

The history of Liberalism in the Churches is that they have deteriorated from historic truths into the social gospels and humanism which cloud their true calling and mission. The God centered principles of the Reformation, and indeed the Apostles, are imperative for a healthy and God Glorifying Church. Sadly, they are quickly being abandoned. In today's politically correct society, keeping God's Word faithfully is both unfashionable and unpalatable in many Church circles. The term "Reformed" in our day is generally applied only to those Churches which follow the Biblical doctrines of Predestination (Sovereignty of God), Irresistible Grace, and Salvation by faith alone (which is sometimes errantly called Calvinism). We don't follow Calvin, we follow Christ! We don't follow his word, we follow God's Word. Let there be no confusion between Christ's name (Christian) we have, and Calvin's.

These are the doctrines, which most distinguishes Reformed Churches from later day Protestant congregations. The Reformed Church is Non-liberal (which means the Non-

We believe in one God, revealed in the three persons of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, as Sovereign Creator and ruler of the universe (1st John 5:7; Isaiah 48:16).

We accept that the Bible is divinely inspired, infallible, and the ultimate authority for the Christian Church today (2nd Timothy 3:16).

We believe in the necessity of regeneration, which is being born from above, a new creation in Christ. Every person who is justified before God, must be born from above (John 3:7).

We believe in the personage of Satan, and his present control over unregenerate man (Luke 22:3; Gal. 4:3).

We believe in the fall and lost estate of man, that he is under the curse of sin, a slave, in bondage, so that he cannot please God with his good works, unless he is born from above unto righteousness by the Spirit of God (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 3:10-18).

We believe in God's irresistible Grace, that all whom God has chosen unto Salvation, and all for whom Jesus Christ died, will be drawn of God, by absolutely no merit of their own, and be Saved through faith (John 6:44; Ephesians. 2:8).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour (Acts 4:12), the God/Man who was crucified in our stead, that our sins might be forgiven. It is in our wearing His robe of Righteousness, that we are accounted righteous. (1st Peter 2:24)

We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, His miraculous virgin birth, and His fulfilling of the prophesy of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Isaiah 53:).

We all believe in the indivisible (not invisible) Church, the Body of Christ, bound together by the Holy Spirit, and consisting only of those who are born from above, for whom Christ now makes intercession in Heaven. We believe in the visible return of Jesus to this world for final judgment (Acts 17:31).

We believe in eternal security, where all for whom Jesus Christ died, and washed away "all" their sins, cannot have that sin come back, wherein they could be lost again. Sin cleansed in Christ's blood does not return. We Believe God is not an idle bystander, but is active in all of nature and the affairs of man, and keeps us and will not slumber -Ps 121:3. Those who truly receive God's Salvation are sealed (secured) by the holy Spirit and preserved in strength of faith and will endure to the end (John 10:27-29; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2nd Cor. 1:22).

#### **Is Reformation Theology "Really" Important?**

*"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.  
Proverbs 22:28*

Virtually all Protestant Churches once held to these "fundamental truths" and were called "Reformed" Churches. This is amazing, considering some of the contrary doctrines coming from many Protestant denominations today. It's hard to believe they started out as the faithful Reformers. But as more and more Churches started to remove the ancient landmarks which preserved the boundaries of our inheritance (Job 24:2; Hosea 5:10), more and more of the Church strayed from the fruitful path to liberal theologies and drifted farther away from these basic truths of scripture. In doing so they have divorced [apostasia] themselves from the evangelical faith and scriptural authority that characterized Historic Reformed Protestant Churches. We are living in a day in which practically every Church denomination is being attacked from within by unbelief. Almost invariably the line of descent of the unfaithful Churches has been from Reformed Theology to a form of

We believe in the Sovereign Right of God, in which,

"..He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'what have You done?' " -Dan. 4:35

We believe God has Chosen those in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame, before the worlds were made. As Scripture makes clear, "He will have mercy on whosoever He will have mercy, and whomever He will, He hardeneth." (Romans 9:18)!

We believe in His realized redemptive death and we understand the faithful truth that Christ did not die in vain for any man, thus He couldn't have died for every man, or indiscriminately for all mankind. The wages of sin is death! He died for His People's sins, those known only to God from before the world, who were predetermined to be Saved, by God's own choosing. His death was efficient for His people, that every sin that went to the cross with Him, was paid for, providing a real redemption for us from those sins (Matthew 20:28; John 10:15, 26; 17:9).

We believe that in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, He did not fail in paying for any sins that He took on himself to the cross. He died in vain for no one, everyone who had their sins in Him as He was on the cross, are redeemed forever. It is Finished! God succeeded in Saving those for whom He died for (Matt. 1:21). He Saved all His people from their sins.

We believe in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, His present exaltation at the right hand of the father, and that in due time He will come again and bring all of His saints with him, and so they will reign in Life and Glory evermore (Luke 24:1-8).