

Reformation and Revival Still Needed Today

In 1517, a professor at the University of Wittenberg, Germany, nailed on the door of the church the traditional public notice board, his ninety-five theses. In this document, he stated some of the grievances he had against the established church.

These blows of Dr. Martin Luther's hammer pounding the document on the church door would echo throughout more than this building before his life was over. The Reformation had begun in earnest. Luther's action was the beginning of a new era in the history of the church. He himself was most surprised by the development of events.

Martin Luther has been described as a man climbing the ancient steeple of a medieval cathedral; struggling up, tired and groping, he reached out his hand to steady himself, laid hold of a rope and was startled to hear above him the clanging of a bell.

He was a man who had stumbled on truths so deep that the immediate implications were quite beyond his understanding, but through his discovery, they echoed throughout the world.

What truths did he stumble on? He discovered the truths of God 's Word. The Bible made such an impact upon him that he became a changed man, at peace with God.

This discovery of great truths is the common experience of those who come to grips with the searching and surprising Word of God, whose timelessness suddenly relates to specific time.

Martin Luther rediscovered the vitality of the Word of God. The church of the twentieth century needs the same spiritual upheaval as the sixteenth. The condition of the church today reminds me of one of the quotations from the late Stephen Leacock. He tells about the hero who "flung himself from the room flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions."

The church is riding off in all directions and needs to get back on course. The church needs nothing short of Reformation and Revival, a rediscovery of the Truth of God, by His people and a renewal of the Life of God within His people. Back to the Bible! The Bible as the Word of God that is powerful and life giving!

Go back to the Bible? Is this the remedy we need? Does it work? The evidence in the lives of millions through the centuries is overwhelming. When men submitted themselves to the Bible, things began to happen, lives were changed.

A clear and classical example is the witness of St. Augustine, the great preacher and theologian (354-430 A.D.) For years he had given all his energies to debauchery and carousing. He really lived it up. Then, weeping and in bitter sorrow he began to seek cleansing and peace.

Suddenly he heard from a nearby house a child's voice saying: "Take and read; take and read." He received this as a command from God and immediately took the Scripture and began to read. His eye fell on these words: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." Augustine's experience was overwhelming. The truth of God's Word hit him and peace came to his heart. His changed life has made an impact upon the church that is still felt today.

The Bible has influenced not only individuals but also nations. J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People* says about the great moral reformation that swept England in the late sixteenth and in the beginning of the seventeenth century: "England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman. It was read in churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm."

Numerous experiences can be cited of lives being changed also today through the reading of the Bible. Of course, this is no surprise for the Christian. Why not? Let me explain it to you in the Living Bible rendering, an appropriate version for such a word:

"For whatever God says to us is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest sword, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires exposing us for what we really are." (Hebrews 4:12).

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