

“REFORMATION SUNDAY”

Based on the Five 'Solos'

Grace Alone Ephesians 2:1-10

To begin to understand the foundations of our faith, we must look deeply at the cornerstones, which carry the weight of our understanding, our indecision, and our learning. Some begin the faith journey from an experience of *grace*, a time when the world turned its back on us, but God did not. To receive grace is to receive “*A gift from God.*” (v8), Paul said. It is humbling, eye-opening, and can be life changing. Ephesians reminds us that for all the good work that we might do, for ourselves, or in the name of the church, if we do not do these things with a sense of humbleness, generosity, and servitude to our Christ, than we really do these things with thinly veiled pride. Have you experienced a moment of worldly grace? Godly grace? Can you give grace?

Scripture Alone 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Our Presbyterian denomination embeds itself firmly in the cornerstone of *scripture*. Our worship service is designed always, to draw your head and your heart to a place, open to hear the Word of God and eager

to learn from it. Timothy says that the scriptures “*Make us wise*” (v15). The scriptures are a continual source of inspiration, direction, and knowledge, and it is because of the stories, parables, prophets and poets which are found within its pages, we become eager to share what we have learned to the world. In times you wish to give thanks, in times of great sorrow and sadness, in times of indecision, and in times you wonder or wander, return to the scriptures, for there, you will find the whispers of God.

Faith Alone Philippians 3:4b-12

Elvis Presley used to sing,

*Only believe, only believe
All things are possible if you'll
only believe*

Faith is perhaps the trickiest of the cornerstones. Because at some point along the walk of life, you choose, or choose not, to believe something greater than yourself. This is called faith. For some, the faith journey has been a natural progression and understanding that has developed calmly and quietly as life progressed. For others, the

realization has been dramatic, often triggered by something grand or tragic. Either way, though, you make a choice to believe. And when your eyes have been opened, there is no turning back, and no desire to turn back. Paul discovered that suffering and loss of worldly things were insignificant to the “*Surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*” (v7). Even more tantalizing, what was yet to come. Paul waited with anticipation, even from a jail cell. Do you wait with anticipation for God to reveal himself to you?

Christ Alone Colossians 1:11-20

Perhaps it is obtuse to say that without *Christ*, none of this (worship, church) would exist. Christ is the cornerstone to the Christian faith. In the ancient world, though, it was difficult for new believers to grasp how Christ was “*The image of the invisible God.*” (v11). God was God; Christ was a man. Yes, but no. Christ was man, but also of the divine, a visible presence of God. And after His death, resurrection, and ascension, it became even more mysterious, as the wisps of the Holy Spirit took their place among the believers, a lingering presence

of the living God which is still amongst us today. Christ's earthly ministry stirred something within the people of ancient days, and continues to stir the heart and soul of people today. The whispers of the Spirit are still hard at work, opening eyes to new things and prying apart hardened hearts.

We read, contemplate, and share His story, His teachings, His suffering, and His divinity, with each other and to the world. He is our example of Godly living, our mentor in our decision making, our focus for prayer. He is the reason we have salvation, eternity, and hope. We as a people will change. Our church will change. It must if it is to survive. But the stories of Christ will remain our cornerstone forever.

**To God Alone be Glory
1 Corinthians 10:23-33**

Some study and contemplate the cornerstones of grace, scripture, faith, and Christ to discover at the end of the journey, the Glory of God. Others catch a glimpse of the glory unexpectedly, and become curious of its foundations.

Either way, we end up here: lives lived and living, stories from the scriptures, knowledge from learning, bruises and gold medals from experiences good and bad, some understanding of the depth and breath and the height of our God's limitlessness, and some time with the temptations of the world and the absolute depth of darkness or grief. But we end up here: surrounded by the glory. This glory is not bound by church rules, it cares little for your social status, how much money is in your bank account, or to put it in the context of Paul's writing, what you serve at your table.

"Whatever you do," said, Paul, "*do it for the glory of God.*" (v31) This is a challenging statement to live up to. It requires all of the other cornerstones to accomplish. In disciplining yourself to live for the glory of God, you will need to give to the world, moments of grace instead of anger. You will need to tell the stories from scripture in a way that someone hearing it for the first time can understand. You will need to step out in faith, and believe

that God will hold you up to accomplish more than you think you can. You will need to rely on the example of Christ, to keep you strong and to keep you hopeful. This is the challenge of living in the glory of God. And the results of your efforts are the delights you discover when living in the glory of God.

These are the ideas that struggled to be heard five hundred years ago. Giving voice to these ideas was in part, why the Reformation Movement began. It is because of the courage of priests and scholars so many years ago, that we are able to worship the way we do, and consider God in a variety of ways. But let us never forget, that we as a denomination, and we as a church are constantly reforming, in small ways. As God continues to show us new ways to understand Him and to serve Him, we must continue to reform, a little here, and a little there. But look closely, because underneath you will find cornerstones, deeply embedded, and firm: grace, scripture, faith, Christ, glory.