

Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one in spirit, not necessarily that they would be united in one organization. In case after case it can be said of leaders of today that they have made the Word of God of no effect through their tradition. Human ideas and human ideals have been substituted for the Word of God.

The second reason for the great need of a reformation in the sixteenth century was the fact that so much more attention was being given to other things than to the central Biblical teaching of justification by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What we call the Reformation of the sixteenth century was one of the greatest revivals in the history of the Christian church. Previous to that time, the great truths of salvation by faith and of the absolute authority of God's word as the sole source of dependable knowledge in spiritual and moral matters *were* ~~was~~ taught ~~in~~ some extent in every part of the Christian world. Yet in every section there were also superstitious ideas and exaltations of human beings to the place where many people considered them almost as important as Christ Himself. Misinterpretations developed and ~~there was~~ wicked men occupied important church positions to such an extent that in every section of the Christian world harmful errors were being propagated, although every section also contained some individuals who were presenting the scriptural truths. The Reformation began when a few great thinkers and great leaders secured a firm grasp on the central truths of scripture and began to preach them with great power and conviction. Inevitably these leaders soon came into conflict with those who were profiting by the superstition and errors of the church.

For at least 200 years before the time of Martin Luther, leader after leader in the Christian church had been declaring the necessity of a reformation. Church council after church council endeavored to carry out the necessary reforms, but just as frequently self-seeking men succeeded in pushing aside or postponing the desired measures, so that very little progress ~~toward~~ *really* reform was actually made.

Today we face a similar situation. During the early years of the present century great numbers of our Protestant churches in the United States heard mostly ethical sermons. Little attention was paid in these churches to the importance of salvation from sin or to the need of eternal life. The constant stress was on ethical matters. Many of these subjects were of real importance, and they have their place, but only as by-products of the proclamation of the Gospel. The central feature of the Christian message, - salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - was largely neglected.

More than thirty years ago Dr. John Gresham Machen fittingly declared that the good news of the Gospel is a message of salvation, not simply an