

# 81<sup>ST</sup> GENERAL SYNOD OF THE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

EDMONTON, AL

AUGUST 3-7 2017

## RESOLUTION

### RESOLUTION 81:05: TRIBUTE TO REFORMATION 500

Five hundred years ago the Protestant Reformation brought untold benefits that are still felt today.

As opposed to the centralized, monolithic Church of Rome under the authority of one man, the Protestant Reformation began the decentralization of the western church.<sup>1</sup> Escape from a remote ecclesiastical hierarchy that was detached and self-perpetuating led to the ultimate establishment of reformation churches through the power of the gospel.<sup>2</sup> Protestant churches flourished in the liberating message of the gospel and through the mutual love of their members.<sup>3</sup>

With the Reformation churches' return to the gospel, Rome's sacerdotalism and clericalism were discarded. Protestant believers do not need medieval church ceremonies nor intermediary priests to bring them to God, since Jesus is their heavenly High Priest<sup>4</sup> and since they themselves are recognized as intercessory priests for the nations.<sup>5</sup> God calls His people to worship Him "in spirit and in truth."<sup>6</sup>

With direct access to God through the gospel of the cross,<sup>7</sup> Protestants have known the liberating power of divine forgiveness and its important fruit, freedom of conscience. As true Christians they are called to live as free people, yet as God's humble servants.<sup>8</sup> Early Protestants were ennobled to discover that they themselves were God's living saints, not needing to pray to dead saints. As God's adopted children, they possess assurance of forgiveness and confidence for living in the presence of a loving Father.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 5:3, 4

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:17

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 5:1, 13, 14

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 7:24-26

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>6</sup> John 4:24

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>9</sup> 1 John 3:1

Once these Reformation principles were understood in Protestant churches, a broader Protestant culture began to shape the western world.

The cross of Christ showed that each sinner's life is equally valuable in the eyes of God. It follows from this pillar that

- every person's life-work is accepted as valuable in God's eyes; all legitimate vocations can be God-honoring,<sup>10</sup> thus breaking down man-made social structures; and
- the high and mighty need a divine Savior as much as the peasant. If the peasant can present himself before the King of heaven, and if the magistrate of the land also needs to present himself before a higher King, then there actually is a spiritual fraternity between Christian king and peasant. This truth led to the demise of the "divine right" of kings and to a democratic impulse that would protect and enfranchise the common man of the post-Reformation world. Thus *political* structures began to improve.

The Protestant Reformation was not just about correcting church abuses and engrained corruption. The Reformation remains ever relevant because it returned to the core questions of the nature of God and how sinners may approach Him and live before Him. The gospel of Christ revealed in Scripture answered these concerns and thereby changed the church and society.

On this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the 81st Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, August 3-7, 2017, declares its gratitude for the gospel of Christ whereby God saves lost sinners by grace alone<sup>11</sup> through faith alone;<sup>12</sup> and we declare our allegiance to the principles of the Reformation that led to a return to biblical Christianity under the authority of the Scripture alone.<sup>13</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 4:28; 5:5-8; 1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>11</sup> Romans 3:24-26

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 2:8, 9

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 8:20; Galatians 1:8, 9