

EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Judy was married for forty-four years to the founder of Christian Financial Concepts, Larry Burkett. For the last seven years of their life together, he battled kidney cancer which took his life on July 4, 2003. During those difficult days, Judy wrote the following truths about God's peace which bear repeating. First, "Larry and I found the promise of Philippians 4:7 to be true: The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Second, "No logic can produce the peace of God . . . [we] simply receive peace as a gift from Him." Third, "The words of St. Francis of Assisi summarize our [prayer]: "God, grant me the courage to change the things I can change, the grace to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference."



Evangelical Theological Society (Eastern Region Conference)

Dr. Mark Hassler, Professor of Old Testament at **Virginia Beach Theological Seminary**, serves as President of the Eastern region of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). The Society aims to "serve Jesus Christ and his church by fostering conservative, biblical scholarship."

Ministry leaders are invited to attend the annual conference of ETS (Eastern region) held at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia on April 22–23 (noon Friday–noon Saturday).

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Michael Grisanti, Distinguished Research Professor of Old Testament at The Master's Seminary. The theme of this year's conference is Biblical Chronology and Interpretive Method. The keynote address will focus on the chronology of the patriarchs and the exodus.

Register for the conference on the ETS Eastern web page ([link](#)).

An Incomplete Reformation

By Dr. Michael Windsor, VBTS Professor of Church History

Church historians usually mark the beginning of the Reformation with the event of Martin Luther nailing the Ninety-five Theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg (October 31, 1517). With this offer of debate over issues of justification, Luther was challenging everyone to consider the reality of justification by faith which he understood from his studies of Romans and Galatians. His understanding of justification by faith stood in theological contrast to the phenomena of Catholic monks circulating among the cities and villages of Europe selling “indulgences.” This sale of indulgences was the assurance that sins could be forgiven by the Catholic Church in exchange for an offering. The Reformation erupted over the doctrine of justification. Did salvation come through faith in the Church and its rituals as mediators of the work of Christ, or did salvation come directly to the repentant sinner through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior?

Those who know Jesus Christ as Savior rejoice in the recovery of the Gospel message during the Reformation. We know our justification before God is grounded in faith in the Redeemer (*sola fide*) based on God being gracious to us because of the work of His Son (*sola gratia*). Our source of authority for this confidence is the Word of God (*sola Scriptura*). We rejoice in the true Gospel being preached, whether it was in 1517 or among us today.

But Luther’s Reformation was an incomplete reformation for the NT church and its ministry. Understanding the doctrine of salvation based on the authority of God’s Word is only *the starting point*. More was and is needed. All doctrine needs to be grounded in the Word of God. Luther raged against the corruption of the medieval Catholic Church and rightly so. But Luther failed to move beyond the medieval theology which he inherited as a Catholic monk to other areas of doctrine which needed to be reformed.

A few decades ago, two Bible teachers were in correspondence with one another. One observed, “The Reformers recovered vital truth in the field of Soteriology [the doctrine of salvation], but they did not go one step in other fields, especially Ecclesiology [the doctrine of the church] and Eschatology [the doctrine of the End Times].” The observation can be unwrapped further when we recognize that Luther inherited a non-biblical view of infant baptism as admittance to the fellowship of the church and held on to that theology. Luther also inherited a non-biblical view of the End Times (i.e. amillennialism) and held tightly to that as well.

Later Reformers would form a theological system, which became known as covenant theology, in order to try to defend several of these practices. Thankfully, over time, some Christians were honest enough with the biblical evidence to abandon these false practices and move back to the biblical practice of believers’ baptism by immersion in church ministry and, in the realm of eschatology, embrace premillennial theology with the anticipation of a literal return of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.

As I meditate on this idea of *Sola Scriptura*, it challenges me with the fact that every aspect of our Christian life, teaching, and ministry must conform to the Word of God. An incomplete Reformation is not sufficient for effective local churches and their ministries. Moses reminded the Israelites that they hungered in the wilderness because God was training them to “know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:3 ESV). Indeed, may our commitment be to know God’s word, and to practice it in our lives and ministries for his glory alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*)!