



The Preface to The Augsburg Confession begins: “Most invincible Emperor, Caesar Augustus, most clement Lord: Your Imperial Majesty has summoned a meeting of the Empire here at Augsburg to consider taking action against the Turk, discussing how best to stand effectively against his fury and attacks by means of military force. The Turk is the most atrocious and ancient hereditary enemy of the Christian name and religion. This meeting is also to consider disagreements in our holy religion, the Christian faith, by hearing everyone's opinions and judgments in each other's presence.” Does this last sentence strike you as a secondary thought? Does the first part of The Preface surprise you? After all, didn't Luther want to go back to the truth of God's Word?

These are logical questions to ask as we begin our study of The Augsburg Confession during Sunday morning Bible Class. The history of our church, the Reformation, The Confessions, and especially preservation of God's Holy Word are of greatest importance. Yet, the Reformation took place during a time of changing culture, threats of war, political considerations, and many other social issues of the time.

The Reformers showed great respect to Emperor (Charles V) as their leader, according to the 4th Commandment, while acknowledging the threats of the Turks to their homeland. (*The Turks are followers of Islam and the prophet Muhammad*: The Confessions, CPH 2006, St. Louis, pg. 701).

Why is it important to understand the Reformation in the context and era in which it takes place? Our situation as Christians is similar today. We live as Baptized children of God in a world opposed to the Word. Understanding the culture of our time is important in being faithful witnesses to all who need to hear of Christ. To view the culture and “forces” at work during the Reformation is important for proclaiming the Gospel.

As we study the “Confessions” during Bible class, it is important to remember “our confession of faith” flows from God's Word. The “Lutheran Confessions” give the statement of our confession of faith, given by God's grace to “proclaim” before all people. At the same time, we will also try to learn about the events of the time that shaped the Reformation to better equip us for our Gospel proclamation today. Faithful Gospel proclamation relies on faithfulness to God's Word. This may sound like a lot, but we ask for God to send His Holy Spirit for guidance and to strengthen our faith.

The Reformation was never intended to bring about a division in the Christian Church, nor was it designed to start a new church. Instead, it was the sincere desire of Luther and many others who were convicted by God's Word that a return to the truth and purity of God's Word was needed that people would know Christ as Savior. The Preface reads:

This meeting is also to consider disagreements in our holy religion, the Christian faith, by hearing everyone's opinions and judgments in each other's presence. They are to be considered and evaluated among ourselves in mutual charity, mercy, and kindness. After the removal and correction of things that either side has understood differently, these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord. Then we may embrace and maintain the future of one pure and true religion under one Christ, doing battle under Him [Psalm 24:8], living in unity and concord in one Christian Church. (The Confessions, pg. 27)

The ultimate goal of removing disagreements (regarding the Word) and bringing about Christian concord did not happen. Does this mean the Reformation failed? Does it mean God's Word does not prevail? **“But the Word of The Lord Endures Forever” 1 Peter 1:25a.** God's Word never fails in its purpose but carries out what He sends it forth to do (**Isaiah 55:10-11**).

From a human perspective, the Reformation may look like a failure since there are so many more denominations today than in the 1500's. Yet, what we must remember is that throughout history, including the time since the Reformation: The Church continues its work. Baptism continues, God's Word is taught; children are taught the faith into which they are baptized (instruction); new members gained by faithful witness to the Word; saints depart the Church Militant (on earth) to enter the Church Triumphant (eternity). God's Word is working, accomplishing His purpose to bring sinners to repentance and faith.

Join us Sunday mornings as we study The Confessions, from God's Word and learn the fascinating history of our church along with the Reformers in all of their human frailty. More important, as we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest God's Word, God the Holy Spirit will bless us and strengthen our faith. To God be all the glory.

In Christ, Pastor