

## WHY REFORMATION IS NOT EASY

Series of events:

Movie

Thoughts about the church

Sermons from other pastors on same topic

Here we Stand

The Contemporary church

Why the wicked prosper

### *Reformation – The Road Less Traveled* *Genesis 37-50*

Today's sermon is going to be a special stand alone sermon that I believe God desires our church to hear. Several ideas have converged in my thinking at *this* time that have led me to preach this today. Let me see if I can lay them out for you before we get started. **First**, there is last weeks sermon titled “**God predestines Everything**” and the implications that involves. **Second** there are the continuing concerns that I have about the state of what used to be rightly called the conservative wing of Protestantism in America. While I still believe that most of the people in these churches are conservative politically, I no longer believe that this movement called Evangelicalism can be classified *as a movement* (though there are surely conservatives within the movement still) in a theologically conservative way. **Third**, there is an interesting question that I have recently been asking myself about our own church and the strange way that God seems to be bringing people to visit our church on a regular basis, but very few seem to actually stay long term. This is the opposite of what we saw during the first half of the existence of our church, yet we have done nothing different in this time. **Fourth**, there is idea of the problem of evil that we are dealing with this week in Sunday School class. The Bible asks God the question regularly, “**Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?**” (**Hab 1:13**). **Fifth**, there is the broad but relatively small movement within differing quarters of Protestantism and Reformed theology to reform the church back to a biblical standard before it is too late. And **finally**, there is the story of Joseph which I have been unable to shake, for every time I think about these things, I think of Joseph and the events that God brought to pass in his lifetime.

Let me put all of these things into a couple of big questions for you so that you can see where I am going with this. How can it be that so many people are hungry for Reformation in their churches, yet when faced with the opportunity to be part of real and lasting change, they will not?

Let me explain. I have never been shy to anyone about admitting that I believe with all my heart that the sorts of things we do in this church are done because we believe them to

be a faithful expression of biblical revelation on ecclesiological (that word comes from “ekklesia” meaning “church” or “assembly”) and doxological (think of “worship”) issues. Such things, then, as our worship, our government, our delivery of the law and gospel through preaching, our view of the very important sacraments, our being a confessional (1689) church, our fellowship... in short everything is done because of our convictions about the Bible’s teaching on these matters. What we do, we do because it is right, good, and true. Having a biblical design seems to me the only proper way of doing practicing that which Jesus Christ and not man instituted. This makes us differ from most of Evangelicalism in our day, of course, because it excludes that we do things simply because they may be pragmatic (practical), utilitarian (useful), and emotional.

### *Freedom Within the Right Way*

Now, listen to this qualification carefully. I have made it clear before and I will make it clear again here: I do not believe that everything in every local church needs to be done exactly like ours does it. We are a right church, but we are not the only right church! There is no cult mentality here, but instead we believe that we are but a small part of “one universal Apostolic” church of which there have been and continue to be many expressions. There is more than one order of service for a church to have and still be a legitimate church. There are different legitimate styles and theories of preaching, positions for singing, and ways of praying. There is nothing that says you *have* to sing the songs that we sing or don’t sing. What we have chosen to do here we do because of our own convictions first and foremost, but also because in the particulars of things (like say the particular order of service that we have) they are orderly (a command), logical (a necessity) and useful for teaching and guiding God’s people past just Sunday morning. We are intentional about everything here, and I trust that this is to your benefit and has helped your own spiritual growth.

### *Wrong Ways of Doing Church*

But this leads me to say something else. Though there is a right way to do church, and though there is freedom in matters that the confession calls – “circumstances” of worship and government – not all matters are in fact circumstances and not all things that churches are doing are right. In other words, there is a right way to do church, and there are also many wrong ways to do church – including how people worship, do government, fellowship, prayer, music, and discipleship.

*The Predestined Movie:*

I watched a movie the other night on TBN of all places! (It didn't originate with them, but was actually one of a series of biblical movies that Ted Turner's company put out a few years ago on the bible. Ted Turner or Paul Crouch? Some choice!). The funny thing is, I watched it thinking, "This is one of the movies in the series that I don't own." Janelle came down and asked what I was doing. When I told her she responded by saying, "What are you watching that on TV for? We own it on video." Sure enough, she went and grabbed it for me and I started to laugh. I had never opened the movie up. I guess God was saving it for this moment. It is the movie on the story of the life of Joseph the son of Jacob. I have been unable to get his story out of my mind. So I went back this week and re-read the story of Joseph, and I believe that this morning God has a message that he wants us all to listen to very closely.

### *A Right Way to Do Church*

Before I tell you again about Joseph, I want to relate to you something else I have been pondering on for a good while now. The specific topic is God's sovereignty over his church (You may even now think of the overlap that Joseph's life has with this topic). His church includes both RBCNC and for our limited purposes the church in America. I have never been shy to anyone about admitting that I believe with all my heart that the sorts of things we do in this church are done because we believe them to be a faithful expression of biblical revelation on ecclesiological (that word comes from "ekklesia" meaning "church" or "assembly") issues. That is, our worship, our government, our delivery of the law and gospel through preaching, our view of the very important sacraments, our being a confessional (1689) church, our fellowship... in short everything is done because of our convictions about the Bible's teaching on these matters. What we do, we do because it is right, good, and true; not necessarily pragmatic, utilitarian, and emotional.

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### *Our Church Convictions*

Those who first attended this church believed strongly in the idea that what we were doing was right and good. And we also believed strongly in the idea that an increasing number of things done in conservative Evangelicalism is spurious (illegitimate) and dubious (of questionable character). This deeply saddened us as I know it greatly saddens nearly everyone who is in this room today. It is perhaps the greatest sorrow and tragedy of our day that Evangelicalism (including much of the Reformed community) - the best hope left after liberalism decimated mainline churches a century ago – by adopting the postmodern spirit of our age, has now officially divorced herself from her Protestant worship legacy and emptied herself of the vast theological storehouses of true food for weary souls, storehouses that have accumulated over these past centuries. **To use a metaphor, we have sold our souls to techno and philosophical junkies who have in return gutted our worship of virtually all biblical essentials and rotted our theology of anything but the most crass forms Pelagianism.**

Don't believe me? A recent Barna poll found that more than 70% of “professing evangelical Christians” in America expressed the belief that **man is basically good**. More than 80% said that the statement “**God helps those who help themselves**” is true and biblical. Please understand, neither of these views are Arminian or even the official teaching of the Roman semi-Pelagian church. Not even John Wesley would say these things. This is unashamed, bald-faced Pelagianism at its finest. The fact of the matter is, it is not necessarily Arminianism that has gotten us here, rather it is the strict denial of original sin and total depravity that is at the heart of today's Pentecostal worship influx into mainstream evangelicalism. And the road to Pentecostalism was paved by none other than the famous preacher of the second great awakening, one Charles Finney – an unashamed Pelagian.

All this exchanging of physical bodies (aka “seekers”) for the corporate church's soul is being done, I believe, by mostly sincere yet mistaken Christians. And in return for quick fixes (that is “spiritual highs” as opposed to “helps”) that we get from having lots and lots of people come to our services, what we are finding is that when they come, we have no food left to offer them? Thus, our people starve, while we ourselves get addicted to the almost hallucinogenic high that comes from having masses of people come to a church just so that they can be really emotional and energetic together.

Continue thinking with me. In sticking with the same metaphor, I am starting to look at what we are doing here in some very literal ways as the equivalent of trying to get a junkie off of his heroine. They say that heroine is one of the most difficult drug habits to quit. Withdrawal symptoms include sweating, nausea, anxiety, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, chills, and fever. One of the biggest problems, as we are told by places like AA, in getting a person off of their drug is to get them to admit that they have a problem in the

first place. Some even say that getting a person to admit their addiction is half of the battle. Consider the words of one of the great exegetes of the church and culture in our times, the late Dr. James Montgomery Boice in the book *Here We Stand: A Call From Confessing Evangelicals*. Dr. Boice said about the very issue before us now,

The task [we are] facing [in trying to bring Reformation] is... difficult. First, it is concerned not with one easily defined issue... but with a pervasive doctrinal downgrade or defection among many alleged evangelicals. Second, this is a matter on which there is no prevailing evangelical consensus. **On the contrary, many do not even perceive that there is a problem, which is itself a very large part of the problem.** Third, [we are] seeking to expose and address this vacuum at a time when many churches would claim that their successes show that what the evangelicals are doing is directly on target and that the blessings of God are apparent everywhere. Church services are well attended. Budgets are large. Evangelical books, gospel music, videos, television and radio programs, and seminars are thriving.<sup>1</sup>

So this is the first great problem that Reformed theology faces in our day. How do we get people to admit that there is even a problem in the first place? I honestly think that the best way to do this is by simply being faithful to the calling and message that God always has for the church, and never being ashamed of it. Furthermore, it comes by each of us learning to love and delight in these things so that when people start to hear about Reformed theology that they will have a place to visit and learn about it with a group of people who themselves have been spiritual changed by it and who themselves desperately love and adore it.

But there is a second problem that we face, and this is the problem I want to focus on this morning. For you see, as with a junkie, it is quite possible that a person will finally be able to admit their addiction, yet they lack the strength or the will to stop. The drug so owns them that they are its slave, though they know it is killing them. In the same way, there are many, many people who are beginning to become aware of the problem that both they and their churches are finding themselves in. For a long time now, many people have been desperately frustrated with the shallowness of Pentecostal music in Reformed and conservative evangelical churches. They know there is a problem. They even know that there is a solution, one of which is to return to better forms of music and another which is to begin to write new music ourselves. The same thing that we are seeing in respect to music is starting to be noticed in the realm of preaching and the sacraments and church government and “who does this make you feel” home bible studies etc.

But there is a problem. For as much as many people are seeing the problem, for whatever reason, they do not lack the desire or spiritual fervor to do anything about it, even when they can. Thus, churches like ours see very slow growth, and even among many who like what we are doing and who do not like where they themselves have been (or continue to be in), there is no move, no change. People do not stay though they visit. And all across the country there is a mighty temptation to begin asking legitimate questions that the eyes cause us to ask and then abandon the eye of faith in seeking to answer the question in a way that makes us feel better about things.

### *Two Tensions*

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<sup>1</sup> Boice, *Here We Stand*, p. 9.

Here then, are two very great tensions that I know everyone in here wrestles with. Some wrestle with them on a logical and rational level and others merely on a semi-aware level where it remains almost on the level of pure feeling alone. Here are the two tensions. The first is this: Why do the evil prosper, while the good perish? The second is like it: How does human responsibility fit with God's sovereignty?

### *Joseph's Story*

Before we answer, let's go to Joseph. Joseph's story is one of the most interesting in all of God's word. We first learn about Joseph in **Genesis 30**. It is a chapter filled bizarre images of Jacob sleeping with one wife, then a maidservant, then another maidservant, then another wife. Out of this polygamous relationship come 11 brothers (Benjamin the 12th is not yet born). The youngest of the 11 is born to the only woman that Jacob actually loved. Rachel gave birth when God opened her womb, which was only after 10 other children were born to Jacob. This event alone is a fascinating one to consider why God would keep a woman's womb closed so that 10 soon to be rebellious and devious brothers could be born to the father of Israel out of what can only be described as a most bizarre and sinful sexual life. Why would God do this and *then* open Rachel's womb just so that Joseph could be born last?

Well, after chronicling some very evil acts by his older brothers, the narrative beginning in **chapter 37** begins to revolve around Joseph to one degree or another. This is interesting, because if you look at it genealogically, Joseph himself does not even count for one of the 12 tribes of Israel. His two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, two half Egyptian sons! (another entire sermon) were to be counted among the 12, but not Joseph himself.

So why did Moses spend so much time talking about Joseph? It is because of the place that his life would have in the subsequent redemptive history of the nation of Israel. Recall all the way back to Abraham. God chose Joseph's great grandfather out of the land of Ur of the Chaldeans. God promised to make Abraham into a great nation and to give his descendants a land flowing with milk and honey. This is the land of the abominable Canaanites, the land we today still call Israel.

Now, Abraham had a son named Isaac who in turn had a son named Jacob. While all three men traveled throughout Canaan, it was not in God's mind to plant their descendants in the land for many centuries. Instead, God wanted to do something different. Think about Jacob specifically. While God *could* have made life easy for him by simply letting him stay in the land and be established there, God instead brought a severe famine to this entire region of earth, eventually sending Israel and his sons out of Canaan and down to the land of Egypt where they would stay for hundreds of years.

Enter then Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph more than the rest of his sons, because he had been born to Jacob in his old age and because Joseph was the son of Rachel his true love. Jacob showed Joseph with great love and gifts. You remember the famous coat of many colors that Joseph wore proudly around his brothers. It was this love that kindled jealousy in the already villainous older brothers. But there was a specific incident when

Joseph had some dreams. In the dreams, his brothers and father were bowing down before him – for he was their lord and master.

The brothers could not take anymore of the dreamer, so they hatched a plan to kill the boy. Two of the brothers, Ruben and Judah intervened and saved Joseph from death by convincing the rest to merely (merely!) sell Joseph into cruel slavery. Thus began Joseph's life hardship and suffering. After time under the master Potiphar, Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife of trying to rape her. Potiphar was enraged and so sent Joseph into permanent exile in Pharaoh's dungeon. After many years spent here, a cup bearer and a baker from Pharaoh's court were sent to prison. They had similar dreams that Joseph was allowed by God to understand. The cupbearer was to be returned to his position while the baker was to be hanged within three days. And it came to pass exactly as Joseph had said. But the cupbearer did not remember Joseph and he was left in prison for a long time.

One day, the Pharaoh began to be plagued by dreams of his own. No one in his court to interpret the dreams and the cupbearer remembered Joseph. Joseph was sent to the Pharaoh and once again God granted him the interpretation of the dream. There would be seven years of plenty in the land of Egypt. But then there would be seven years of terrible drought and famine. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of making sure that there would be enough food in the land to last out the famine. And in this way, Joseph rose to the second greatest man in all Egypt – after spending 13 years in slavery and prison.

Shall we return to our two tensions then? Why do the evil prosper while the good perish and suffer?

The story of Joseph's life is striking.

Many have noticed how the man's life is in many ways a type of Christ's. DONE NOTHING WRONG,

GOES INTO EXILE...Delivers his people...

his is the great problem we are faced with. Most people, even those who come from good solid Christian backgrounds simply do not agree with our assessment of things. Of course, their disagreement has no biblical warrant. It's just their opinion, and in America what matters more than opinions? Perhaps there may even be some here today that don't like what we do, don't think the Reformed assessment of things is true, and quite simply

don't think there really is much of a problem in Evangelicalism. I challenge you then, on what biblical basis do you draw your thinking from? Or is it only just your feelings and opinions that move you on this vital theological question?

Well, I want to carry out the metaphor just a bit further.

The nearly three years that we have existed have been fascinating for me to think about theologically. We began with just a handful of people. I think there were something like 12 of us that first Sunday meeting. When we were first planning out how to go about making this church work, we decided that one thing was more important than anything else. It is upon this thing that our church rests. We will only do things here as we are convinced in mind and conscience that the Scripture wants us to do them. We will not add from his word, nor will we subtract from it. This principle (Sola Scriptura) is why we worship the way we do, why we have set up the constitution we have set up, why we believe the things we believe, why we preach the way we preach, and why we teach the things we teach. If ever the time comes when the leaders of this church (be that in a week or a hundred years from now when I am dead and gone) begin question the goodness of God's word because it doesn't seem to be practical enough for answering questions that our physical sight lead us to ask, then it is time to close the doors and all go home.

That said, I want to tell you about some questions that my physical sight leads me to continue to ask. I cannot help but ask these questions as I know that many of you cannot help but ask either. One particular question comes up again and again in my own mind, especially as I consider trying to make sense of the brief history of our church. For you see, when we first began this church, we did nothing differently than we do three years later. What is interesting to me is to try to make sense of God's sovereignty over the history (and then future) of this church.

Here is what is puzzling to me. The first year and a half saw relatively few visitors come through our doors on Sunday. Yet, the few visitors we had returned and then eventually stayed. To put it another way, the majority of you have been in this church for well over half of the churches life at this time. Looking over the past year and a half, having done nothing different, except maybe get the word out a little more that we are here, we have seen many visitors come through our doors on Sunday, many more than we did for the first year and half. Yet, a vast majority of those visitors have not stayed. Instead, they have come and they have not returned. And I, for the life of me, can't figure out why. If nothing is essentially different in the way we are doing things, then I believe we can rightly look to God for the answers to our questions – though he may or may not see fit to answer our questions the way we would like.

Now, don't get me wrong. This puzzles me to a great degree and to some degree it frustrates me, because I honestly believe that what we have here is something that everyone on this planet needs to be a part of. If I didn't believe that, I would have no

right to continue as the pastor of this church. But I am not discouraged by this for the main reason that I know it is my physical eyes that are asking the question.

I share this with you because having talked with some of you, I know that you ask the same question as I am essentially asking here. The question is this. Why does God seem to prosper at some times and not at others? Is it our fault? It is his doing alone? Should we just accept fate (as if there is such a thing?) Do we need to be doing more? Should we press God's hand on the matter? What is our responsibility as a church on these things? These are important questions. More importantly, however, these are questions that we should not be afraid of acknowledging that we all have. Why? Because God's people throughout the ages have had the exact same questions.

If I am right, and if this church is acting as faithfully and is being at its essence the sort of church that pleases God, then I believe we are well within our rights to ask these sorts of questions. I want to give you a sampling of some of the ways that God's saints in the past have asked this same sort of a question now.

## OUTLINE - God Predestines Everything: An Appendage

### I. The Times we are Living In

- A. Letter: A Politically Conservative Presbyterian Church Service in South Denver on 11-28-04.

Hey Sean,  
So here's that email I promised you.

Okay, my church on Sunday. It started off by the band (which plays really well) playing a Beatles Medley just as an instrumental as everyone started to walk into the sanctuary. The first song we sang was "Help." We sang another song too, but I don't remember what it was. I'll skip over announcements and offering and stuff. Then, this video started playing. You know how there are about eight TV's in the sanctuary alone? Well, from where I was sitting, I could see about three. The video went on *forever*. Everyone that I've talked to about the sermon said that they were wondering if there really was going to be someone talk to us or if we were just going to watch a movie all service.

The movie showed pictures of Ken Mansfield (former Beatles Manager - which because he was visiting the church was the purpose of the whole production) with the Beatles and basically the Beatles doing random things. The first part of the movie was just a history of how the Beatles became famous in the United States. Then Mansfield started talking about his childhood and how he was raised in a Christian home in Idaho or somewhere. His mother was a Christian, and he went to church every Sunday, but he said he never really was saved. His father wanted him to stay in Idaho and be a logger or a farmer or some job, instead he went and stuff happened and he became a manager for Capital records.

He ended up working with the Beatles, becoming very rich, and getting involved with spirituality- yoga, meditating, all that new age stuff. The video was still playing, showing random pictures of people sitting in the lotus position, with incense burning in the background. Then the Beatles fell apart, Ken lost his job, his house, his money and everything. He went to Nashville to start over and he met some woman and dated her, but she decided that she wouldn't marry him because he wasn't a Christian and so he became a Christian because he wanted to have the passion of God that she had. He wrote a book about his life and the Beatles.

Then the movie ended and Ken stood up and started talking to us. He made jokes about how he used to work with the fat(b?) four, but now he worked with the big three. He talked about writing his book and how each of the Beatles approved a version of the manuscript. Well, actually Yoko approved it because not all the Beatles were alive. Ken also claimed that the Beatles that are still alive would come to know Christ and change the world for Jesus (I bet the pastors of CHCC were thrilled by that, because who knows, maybe in a while an actual Beatle could come to our church). Everyone that I talked to from my church loved the message and they were really glad that he came. As Ken left the stage, one of the pastors from the church said that he would be in the lobby where we could buy his great

book. He also said that Ken had cancer or something.

I really wish it was easier to switch churches in my family.

B. History of our church over three years.

1. First half: Few visitors - lots stayed
2. Second half: Many visitors - few stayed

II. Thesis: In light of last weeks sermon called "God Predestines Everything" how do we rest in God's sovereignty (when things are so different from what we would like) while not being complacent and while still actually acting in such a way as to affirm his sovereignty"

Another way of saying it: We know that God predestines all things, but do we really have FAITH that it is so. Not just knowledge of it, but faith!

III. Joseph, story of Faith in the midst of hidden sovereignty.

- A. The most loved son of Jacob the son of Isaac the son of Abraham.
- B. The most hated son by 10 older brothers - BROTHERS, sons of the covenant, elders of the tribes of Israel, saved and beloved themselves by God despite:
  1. Ruben - *Gen 35:22* - Steals Jacob's concubine Bilhah, defiles his bed.
  2. Simeon and Levi - *Gen 34:25ff* - exact revenge, kill an entire town
  3. Judah - *Gen 37:26* - Sold Joseph into Slavery.
- C. Joseph's life is sadness
  1. Boy's want to murder him
  2. Sold into Slavery
  3. A Slave in Egypt
  4. Sent to Prison because of the wicked wife of Potiphar
  5. Total time from beginning to end (17 years old - 30 years old) 13 years! (Two years longer because the cupbearer forgot about Joseph).
- D. Sovereignty: God was with Joseph.
  1. In Potiphar's house: "The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered" (*Gen 39:2*).
  2. In Prison: "because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did" (*Gen 39:23*).
  3. Stephen said, "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles" (*Acts 7:9-10*).

E. Responsibility: Joseph was not complacent

1. "His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in *everything he did*, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned" (Gen 39:3-4).
2. "So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care" (Gen 29:22-23).
3. "Let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine." The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (Gen 41:33-41).

F. Joseph had no idea of the future. Thought himself a slave forever, but remained faithful and obedient.

IV. All sermons should first and foremost point you to Christ. Joseph is in Scripture for this many chapters for two reasons.

- A. God's sovereignty. God wanted to bring Jacob out of Israel the land of promise. This resulted in blessing for Israel and his family but in slavery for the nation so that God might deliver them.
- B. One great portrait of Christ Jesus.
  1. Betrayed by his own brothers and sold to Gentiles
  2. Endured humiliation and death to rescue his people - his brothers and family.
  3. Faithfulness rewarded with exaltation to the right hand of the Great King.
  4. Wicked deeds done against them were things that God had purposed for good.
    - a. Gen 50:20 - "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."
    - b. Acts 2:23 - "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

5. The story is itself of great historic-redemptive significance.
- C. APPLICATION: Marvel at how God has written redemptive history - the story of the Exodus and how it came to pass exactly how God wanted it to come to pass - to display both his own mighty hand and the hand of his Son for you.
- V. This sermon seeks to also encourage us to an active faith, a faith like Joseph's, like Christ. A faith that both trusts fully in God's sovereignty, never compromising this most foundational pillar of grace, and yet is not complacent in its actions. Faith without deeds (active TRUST) is dead.
- A. God's people live *individually* (and in families) and *corporately* (with the church).
1. When you suffering privately or in family, do you trust God?
    - a. Doubt of God's promises
    - b. Income
    - c. Loneliness: Friends/soul mates
    - d. The future: Who knows what it could bring for better or for worse
    - e. Security, safety - troops
    - f. School, decisions about that
    - g. Anxiety, worry
    - h. Health: Seizures, pain,
    - i. The Salvation of friends who don't seem to care
  2. Comfort and Rest in the suffering times is found only in Christ and his suffering and exaltation.
  3. Corporately: What is God doing with his church?
    - a. Like *Joseph, our brothers are forsaking God and us. Why?*
    - b. Why do so many not care about truth or Scripture?
    - c. Why do so many others who do care not do anything about it?

DRUG ANALOGY: Admit the problem, go through the withdrawal pains.

BOICE QUOTE: "The task [we are] facing [in trying to bring Reformation] is... difficult. First, it is concerned not with one easily defined issue... but with a pervasive doctrinal downgrade or defection among many alleged evangelicals. Second, this is a matter on which there is no prevailing evangelical consensus. **On the contrary, many do not even perceive that there is a problem, which is itself a very large part of the problem.** Third, [we are] seeking to expose and address this vacuum at a time when many churches would claim that their successes show that what the evangelicals are doing is directly on target and that the blessings of God are apparent everywhere. Church services are well attended. Budgets are large. Evangelical books, gospel music, videos, television and radio programs, and seminars are thriving."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Boice, *Here We Stand*, p. 9.

- d. Our church (like Christ) is like a restaurant - providing essential nourishment to the hungry.
- d. Our church (like Christ) is like a hospital - to help the hurting.
- e. Our church (like Christ) is like an inn - providing rest for the weary.
- f. Our church (Like Christ) is to be a leader - providing direction to the lost.

Are we trusting Christ? What ifs....

- 4. What if God is preparing us like he did Joseph for some great famine to come? We must be patient, have faith, trust God's providential hand, the same as we are to do in our private lives.

Joseph: slavery

Always active,

BROTHERS sold him, not enemies - God still loved those brothers.