

Introduction

- The people of God have always been called by Him to be a holy (sanctified or set apart) people.

1 Pet. 1:14-16—¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “*You shall be holy, for I am holy (Lev. 11:44).*”

As the church strayed from the Scripture alone as the rule of faith, there was an obscuring of the simplicity of the Gospel message. The inevitable result of the loss of the Gospel was the compromising of the church's holiness.

The Church's Testimony Compromised

In the early centuries of the church, the leaders heeded the words of Jesus and the apostles, setting an example of faithfulness and self-sacrifice for the people whom they served. Over time, however, the church's leadership became increasingly caught up in worldly affairs.

Historical Background:

Sinful Leadership Within the Church:

- 1. The Church's leaders at times acquired their positions by _____ means.**

Nepotism →

Simony →

Lay-investiture →

- 2. The Church's leaders at times lived openly _____ lives.**

⇒ Julius II (1503 to 1513) fought numerous wars to expand his political power which led to the deaths of thousands.

⇒ Alexander IV (1492 to 1503) was reported to have had numerous mistresses and to have fathered several illegitimate children for whom he acquired positions within the church.

- 3. The Church's leaders at times promoted _____ for their own gain.**

The Veneration of Relics

The Sale of Indulgences

“These absurdities...are a good trade, and procure a comfortable income to such priests and friars as by this craft hey get their gain...What shall I say of [the ones who] cry up and maintain the cheat of pardons and indulgences?—that by these compute the time of each soul's residence in purgatory, and assign them a longer or shorter continuance according as they purchase more or fewer of these paltry pardons...Or what can be said bad enough of others who pretend that by the force of such magical charms, or by the fumbling over their beads in the rehearsal of such and such petitions (which some religious imposters invented, either for diversion, or, what is more likely, for advantage), they shall procure riches, honors, pleasure, long life, and lusty old age, nay, after death, a seat at the right hand of the Savior?” —Erasmus of Rotterdam, In Praise of Folly

The Consequence: The Church lost credibility among the people who continued their association with it primarily out of the fear of hell and purgatory. All of this meant that the people were eager and willing to embrace reform.

The Sale of Indulgences and the 95 Theses

- Pope Leo X needed funds for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and decreed an indulgence for the German people who would contribute to its rebuilding.
- A friar named Johann Tezel traveled throughout the nation selling these indulgences. Eventually, some from Wittenberg purchased them and came to inform Martin Luther who responded furiously by composing his 95 Theses.

Highlights from the 95 Theses

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance
16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation.
32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
62. The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.
63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last (Mt. 20:16).
64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.
82. Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?"
86. "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"

Reformation Doctrine

1. The holiness of the True Church is found ultimately in the work of Christ on her behalf, not in her good works.

Heb. 10:10—By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (NET Bible)

"Who can comprehend the riches of the glories of this grace? Christ that rich and pious husband, takes as a wife a needy and impious prostitute, redeeming her from all her evils and supplying her with all his good things. It is impossible now that her sins should destroy her, since they have been laid on Christ and swallowed up in him, and since she has in her husband, Christ, [she possesses] a righteousness that she may claim as her own and that she can set up with confidence against all her sins, against death and hell, saying, 'If I have sinned, my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned; all mine is his, and all his is mine,' as it is written, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' (Song 2:16)" —Martin Luther

2. The True Church is to give testimony through her conduct that she has been made into a holy people by God.

1 Pet. 2:11-12—¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

"Because the Father has reconciled us to Himself in Christ, therefore He commands us to be conformed to Christ as to our pattern." —John Calvin

- She is to evidence a _____ of the Lord. (Acts 9:31)
- She is to _____ regularly for worship. (Heb. 10:24-25)
- She is to demonstrate love for all the _____. (1 John 4:7)
- She is not to love the _____ or the things which it loves. (1 John 2:15)
- She is to maintain faithful _____ to Christ in the surrounding culture. (1 Pet. 3:16)

God's promises concerning new _____ always precede His _____ regarding new conduct!

2 Cor. 6:14-7:1

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them (Lev. 26:11-12; Ezek. 20:34), and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:33). ¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them (Isa. 52:11), says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you (Jer. 31:9), and you shall be sons and daughters to me (Isa. 43:6), says the Lord Almighty."

¹ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Questions to Consider

Where has the Lord placed me in order to use me to give testimony to the reality that I have been made holy in Christ?

In what ways am I tempted to try and compensate for my sin through "practical indulgences?"