

Text: Romans 8:28

Theme: The Man... The Moment

October 29, 2017

How many of you have ever been in the right place at the right time? How many incidents can you recall where someone else was in the right place at the right moment for your benefit? God has an incredible way of putting the right people in the right place at the right moment whether it's in the past, the present, or the future. Today, as we observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we focus on the man and the moment.

I. Five hundred years ago, God placed a man in the right place at the right moment.

A. That particular man was Martin Luther. 1. As we look at that moment, we realize that he was chosen by God. Did Luther wake up one morning and decide that he was going to make history, that he was going to turn the church of his day upside down, that he was going to make a name for himself? Do you ever wake up thinking, "Today is my day; I'm going to change the world today?" We might think such things, but God is the one who does the choosing. Just like God chose so many throughout Scripture, God chose Luther, and, at that moment, Luther didn't even know it.

2. Not only do we realize that he was chosen, we also realize that he was prepared by God. By all human standards, Luther was a genius. Luther was able to read and translate both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. Beyond that, Luther translated the entire Bible into German so the people of his day could read the Word for themselves. Could any of us do that or something even close to that? Whether Luther or someone we know today, it may be easy to think it's all about the person, but the reality is that it's all about God. God did the preparation. God and only God enabled him to be prepared for that moment.

3. Likewise, Luther was also empowered by God. How many times have you said to yourself, "Someday I going to do such and such," but that some day never comes? Luther wasn't expecting this moment. He surely wasn't thinking, "Some day, I'm going to leave my mark in history and create a group of followers called 'Lutherans'." Behind the scenes where Luther and none of us can see, God does His finest work. Behind the scenes, God prepares and empowers for moments we never realize and, behind the scenes, God was preparing and empowering a quiet man to step out of the shadows and speak because God had empowered him to speak.

B. Using the man, Luther, what did God do in that moment? 1. God protected forgiveness. What if forgiveness didn't exist, if you could ask, but God would always say, "Sorry, My forgiveness isn't available to you?" Do you realize how devastating that would be, the burden of guilt we would carry? Luther's God-directed mission was to protect forgiveness. The church of his day had drifted to the point that they were selling a piece of paper as a means of offering forgiveness. God could not allow that to happen to His precious gift of forgiveness. In this moment, Luther was the man God had chosen to protect the central teaching of the Christian faith.

2. In that moment, God protected the doctrine of grace. What's grace? Grace is God doing the unthinkable for the undeserving in a remarkable way. I'll do my part and God will do His part - that's where the church had drifted. The clear Scripture, "By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God,"

was being ignored and God would not allow that to persist. On the day we call "Reformation Day," God prompted Luther to nail the issues of the day to the church door for all to see. A popularity move? Not for a moment. A move directed by God to protect the doctrine of grace alone? That was precisely God's doing.

3. God protected the Word of God. What God says here in His Word can be explained and verified elsewhere in His Word. That's the doctrine of Scripture alone, the teaching the Scripture interprets Scripture. If Scripture no longer interprets itself, who decides what it says? Without Scripture alone, you can make the Bible say anything you want it to say. That was the danger in that moment. God needed to protect the validity and truth of His Word. In that moment, God used Luther as His instrument to protect the power of the Word lest that power be misdirected into the hands of people to decide for themselves what the Word says.

C. Luther was the man in that moment, but this, this is your moment. 1. This is your moment to be prepared by God. Luther was used by God in that moment, but in this moment, God is preparing you. Maybe not for an event that is celebrated 500 years later, or maybe He is. Either way, God is leading you in specific directions, placing you in particular locations and situations. You may not see it. You may not get a text message or tweet from God, but it's happening. The more we open our hearts to His preparation, the more preparation progress God will make. When you believe God is preparing you, you will know and see how God is preparing you.

2. This is your moment to be empowered by God. We like to say, "I can't do that!" But God knows otherwise. When our hearts are humble and open to God's direction, when we aren't thinking, "Look at me, world!," God is quietly, behind the scenes, preparing you for your next moment. It may be a small moment in your mind. It may be viewed by you as no moment at all. But when we acknowledge that God is preparing and empowering, that every moment is a God-empowered moment, that every opportunity is a God-empowered opportunity, we realize that our next moment is God's moment, that our next step deeper into our faith is a God-empowered moment.

3. This is your moment to protect the truth as you change the course of history. What's the world's latest definition of truth? It's whatever you want it to be. Truth is whatever you decide is truth. In the midst of a world that has no hope and no sense of truth, we must protect the truth of God's Word. We must stand on our faith, on God's Word and refuse to budge on matters of faith. We can and we must adapt to change or we die, but, at the same time, we cannot and we must not waver from the truth of God's Word or we will die spiritually. This is your moment, this is my moment to protect the truth because without it, we and everyone we meet loses everything.

4. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther was the man and Reformation Day was the moment. Today, you are the man; you are the woman, and this, this is your moment, your God-given, God-directed moment. Amen.