

## A History of the Work of Redemption

By Jonathan Edwards

### Lesson 23 - Period 3 - Part 5-From the Reformation to the Time of Edwards

*“The work of redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world”*

Edwards now is tracing God’s work of redemption up to his present time (mid 1700’s). He starts with the great work of God in the \_\_\_\_\_. During the Reformation the Lord was pleased to bring a sudden and far-reaching revival to His church.

*“The first thing to be taken notice of is the Reformation itself. This was begun in Germany, about the year fifteen hundred and fifteen, by the preaching of Martin Luther, who being stirred in his spirit to see the horrid practices of the popish clergy-and having set himself diligently to inquire after truth by the study of the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of the ancient fathers of the church-very openly and boldly decried the corruptions and usurpations of the Romish church in his preaching and writings.”*

*“Thus God began gloriously to revive His church again, and advance the kingdom of His Son; after such a dismal night of darkness from the rise of Antichrist to that time. There had been many endeavors used by the witnesses for the truth for a reformation before. But now, when God’s appointed time was come, His work went on with a swift and wonderful progress; and Antichrist, who had been rising higher and higher from his beginning till that time, was swiftly and suddenly brought down; he fell half-way towards utter ruin, and never has been able to rise again to his former height.”*

However, during this great time of spiritual growth for the church there was also a great \_\_\_\_\_ that was mounted against it. There were 5 main ways that Satan opposed the Reformation.

1. **The council of \_\_\_\_\_**-The council of Trent was the Roman Catholic Church’s response to the Reformation. Over the span of several years (1545-1563) the Roman Catholic Church rooted itself in its theology that was opposed to the doctrines of the Reformation and listed a series of anathemas against those who taught opposite doctrines.

*“Thus the church of Rome, instead of repenting of their deeds, when such clear light was held forth to them by Luther and other servants of God, persisted, by general agreement in council, in their vile corruptions and wickedness, and obstinate opposition to the kingdom of Christ. The doctrines and practices of the church of Rome, which were chiefly condemned by the Reformed, were confirmed by the decrees of their council; and the corruptions, in many respects, were carried higher than ever before.”*

A sample-from Chapter 9 under Justification produced by the council of Trent

*“For even as no pious person ought to doubt of the mercy of God, of the merit of Christ, and of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, even so each one, when he regards himself, and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension touching his own grace; seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.”*

2. **Secret \_\_\_\_\_**-During this time and the years that followed one attempt that was used to put down the Reformation was the secret plotting of others to scheme and organize attacks. Edwards here mentions the time in England when there were plots to put a Roman Catholic back on the throne (James Stuart) after the death of Queen Anne. However, this plot was foiled, and England passed a law that forbid any Roman Catholic from ever taking the throne of England.
3. **Open \_\_\_\_\_**-The Roman Catholic church and princes did seek to put down the Reformation by declaring war on protestant nations and individuals. Edwards mentions the battles that took place in Germany, Switzerland, and also the great planned attack by the Spanish Armada.

4. **Vicious and Violent** \_\_\_\_\_-There were many who sought to eradicate the Reformed faith by torturing the saints. One can look at the attempts of Bloody Mary, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre to find evidences of the horrible sufferings of Protestants.
5. **Corrupt** \_\_\_\_\_-The last way Edwards discusses for how Satan attempted to overthrow the Reformation was by the growth and spreading of false teaching. He lists five main false teachings: the radical anabaptist opinion of throwing off all submission to any civil government, the rise of "enthusiasts" who claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit directly, the rise of Socinianism (anti-Trinitarian religion that taught Jesus was just a man), the growth of Arminianism, and the spread of deism.

Next Edwards talks of the \_\_\_\_\_ that the gospel had during this period. Just as at every other time in history, the attempts of Satan to overthrow true religion were not successful and the kingdom of Christ grew and advanced.

Here Edwards focuses on the spread of the gospel in a portion of western Russia (called Muscovy in Edwards day), the slow spread of the gospel with the native American Indians in America, and he mentions briefly the great \_\_\_\_\_ that was taking place in his own region at the time.

Edwards concludes this section by taking notice of the present state of things. He will highlight how things have gotten worse in recent years and also how things have gotten better.

**Worse**-Three ways that things have gotten worse in his day than the previous years were:

1. **The reformed church was greatly** \_\_\_\_\_-In much of Europe those countries that at one time had large protestant populations were now greatly diminished. A chief example of this would be the country of France.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **Doctrine had greatly been** \_\_\_\_\_-Through the rise of many false teachings the protestant church was greatly weakened. Edwards takes special notice of how these false teachings greatly weakened the kingdom of Christ in England.

*"Never any age wherein there was so much scoffing at and ridiculing the gospel of Christ by those who have been brought up under the gospel-light."*

3. **The desire for** \_\_\_\_\_ **living was greatly** \_\_\_\_\_-When sound doctrine wains the necessary impact will be a lack of zeal for godliness. Sound doctrine promotes godliness. A lack of godliness always starts with a fading away of sound doctrine. When people know longer know the truth they will not live in a way that accords with the truth.

**Better**-Edwards did not see all as loss. Things were happening that were advantageous for the advance of the Kingdom of Christ.

1. **The power and influence of the papacy were greatly** \_\_\_\_\_-That institution that had led so many people astray for centuries was still greatly weakened. The papacy never had regained its former strength and this is a good thing for the kingdom of Christ.
2. **Less physical** \_\_\_\_\_-It is a good thing when the church is not outwardly persecuted and its members are not wickedly abused. The issue of his day was not physical persecution but outward scoffing.

*"The humor now is to despise and laugh at all religion; and there seems to be a spirit of indifference about it."*

3. **A great** \_\_\_\_\_ **of** \_\_\_\_\_-Edwards calls learning and increasing knowledge "the handmaiden to divinity". Learning is a great advantage to Christianity in both a positive and negative aspect.