

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A Short Course on Church History

Post Tenebras Lux: The Reforming Church, Part 1

- I. What exactly are we “**protesting**”?

- II. Background: **The Need** for Church Reform
 - a) Moral Decay

 - b) Veneration of Relics

 - c) Indulgences

 - d) Sacerdotalism

- III. **Martin Luther** (1483-1546)

- a) Luther’s Family/Home

- b) Luther the **Monk**

In the monastery, Luther was driven to find acceptance with God through _____.

He wrote: *“I tortured myself with prayer, fasting, vigils and freezing; the frost alone might have killed me... . What else did I seek by doing this but God, who was supposed to note my strict observance of the monastic order and my austere life? I constantly walked in a dream and lived in real idolatry, for I did not believe in Christ: I regarded Him only as a severe and terrible Judge portrayed as seated on a rainbow.”*

Elsewhere he recalled: *“When I was a monk, I wearied myself greatly for almost fifteen years with the daily sacrifice, tortured myself with fastings, vigils, prayers, and other very rigorous works. I earnestly thought to acquire righteousness by my works.”*

Penance ...

The *Scala Sancta* ...

c) Luther the **Professor**

One question consumed him:

Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Luther had understood the righteousness of God to mean His _____ righteousness, His avenging justice by which He _____ sin.

On those terms, he admitted that he hated the righteousness of God. But while sitting in the tower of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Luther meditated on this text and wrestled with its meaning. He writes:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

The date of his salvation – according to Luther himself, was in 1519 - _____ he posted the 95 Theses.

Luther came to realize that salvation was a _____ for the _____, not a _____ for the _____!

The "righteousness of God" that saves sinners is not an active one (something man does), but is rather entirely passive. A man is not righteous because of what he achieves, but because of what Jesus Christ did for him in his death and resurrection. Man is not saved by his good works but by trusting the finished work of Christ.

Thus, _____ became the central tenet of the Reformation.

d) Luther the **Reformer**

1. *95 Theses* (1517)

2. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520)

3. Diet of Worms (1521)

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.”

IV. Luther: **3 Key Doctrines**

a) Justification by Faith Alone – Romans 3,4,5,6,9,10,11, etc.

b) Theology of Glory/Theology of the Cross

Galatians 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ ... yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

c) Believer’s Freedom

Galatians 5:1 (ESV)

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

John 8:36 (ESV)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

V. Luther's Legacy

One of the great rediscoveries of the Reformation — especially of Martin Luther — was that the word of God comes to us in the form of a _____ - the _____.

Luther grasped this powerful fact: God preserves the experience of salvation and holiness from generation to generation by means of a book of revelation, not a bishop in Rome.

Luther said with resounding forcefulness in 1545, the year before he died, *“Let the man who would hear God speak, read Holy Scripture.”* Here alone, in the pages of the Bible, God speaks with final authority. Here alone, decisive authority rests. From here alone, the gift of God's righteousness comes to hell-bound sinners.

Upon his death, his wife, Katherine, wrote concerning his lasting influence and monumental impact upon Christendom: *“For who would not be sad and afflicted at the loss of such a precious man as my dear lord was. He did great things not just for a city or a single land, but for the whole world.”*

Next week: Zwingli, Calvin, and the Swiss Reformers