

Martin Luther and the recovery of the true gospel

I. Introducing Luther

- A. The parents
- B. The student
- C. The storm

II. Three stories

- A. Luther becomes a lecturer
- B. Luther has a crisis

Luther on his sins:

I used to be contrite, to confess and number off my sins, and often repeated my confession, and diligently performed my allotted penance. And yet my conscience could never give me certainty, but I always doubted and said 'You did not do that correctly. You were not contrite enough. You left that out of your confession. The more I tried to remedy a weak, uncertain afflicted conscience with the traditions of men, the more each day found it more uncertain, weaker, more troubled.

Luther on righteousness:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the justice of God," [Rom. 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26] because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.

- C. Luther makes a complaint

III. Four texts

A. *The Ninety-five Theses* (October 1517)

First Thesis

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘repent’ [Mt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

B. *Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses* (February 1518)

Luther on making satisfaction

The people must first be taught faith in Christ, the gracious bestower of remission. Then they must be persuaded to despair of their own contrition and satisfaction so that, when they have been strengthened by confidence and joy of heart over the compassion of Christ, they final may despise sin cheerfully, become contrite, and make satisfaction (*LW* vol. 31, p. 103).

Luther on the papacy’s priorities

If those who hinder people from going to Rome sin so greatly, what about those who prevent them from going to heaven (*LW* vol. 31, p. 238)?

Luther on reformation

The church needs a reformation which is not the work of one man, namely, the pope, or of many men, namely the cardinals, both of which the most recent council has demonstrated [The Fifth Laternal Council, meeting in Rome from 1512-1517], but it is the work of the whole world, indeed, it is the work of God alone. However, only God who has created time knows the time for this reformation (*LW* vol. 31, p. 250).

C. ‘The Heidelberg Disputation’ (May 1518)

D. *The Acta Augustana (The Proceedings at Augsburg)* (October 1518)

IV. Five lessons