



ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY
BY
MARTIN LUTHER

WESTMINSTER BOOK OF THE MONTH
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MAY 3, 2023

I. LUTHER THE SON

- Born November 10, 1483, to Hans and Margaret Luther in Eisleben, Germany.
- Hans arranged for Martin to study at Erfurt to become a lawyer.
- July 2, 1505 – Luther caught in a thunderstorm: *“Help, St. Anne, and I will become a monk!”*
- July 17, 1505 – Joins St. Augustine Monastery in Erfurt.



II. LUTHER THE FRIAR

- **Luther's Medieval world:** A hierarchy ruled by the church and pope!
- **Luther's Medieval view of salvation:**
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*"In the medieval understanding, justification was a **process** of growing righteous via the **impartation** of Christ's righteousness connected to **the infusion of grace** via the sacramental ministry of the church."*

- Carl Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life*, 67

II. LUTHER THE FRIAR

- **“I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.”**



II. LUTHER THE FRIAR

- **“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.”**



III. LUTHER THE THEOLOGIAN

SIN = not a weakness, but
utter inability before God!

BAPTISM = not a temporary
fix, but a sign of death and
resurrection!

THE CROSS = the
unexpected place where God
reveals His power to save!



III. LUTHER THE THEOLOGIAN

WSC Q. 33. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.



III. LUTHER THE THEOLOGIAN

“For in it [i.e., the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Rom 1:17)

“Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience . . . I was angry with God, and said, ‘As if it is not enough that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by the law, 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. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.”



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“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 is righteous shall live.”’ Then I grasped that the righteousness 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 ‘righteousness of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love.”



ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

The ROARING 20's!
Luther's three great works in 1520:



Luther, in 1520, burning Pope Leo X's "bull" (or official decree) threatening Luther with excommunication.

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The ROARING 20's!

Luther's three great works in 1520:

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church

✚ Luther's critique of Roman Catholic sacraments.

An Appeal to Christian Nobility

✚ Luther's critique of Roman Catholic church power, affirming the right of laymen to spiritual independence (i.e., "the priesthood of all believers").

On Christian Liberty

✚ Luther's application of his newly discovered doctrine of justification by faith alone to the realm of ethics.



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ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

“A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.”

“A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

(p. 2)



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ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

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“[N]o external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom, or in producing unrighteousness or servitude.” (4)



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“One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. **That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ** ... Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word.” (5, 7).



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Rom 6:14 – “... you are not under law but under grace.”

Gal 2:19 – “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.”



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“**Our faith in Christ does not free us from works** but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works. Faith redeems, corrects, and preserves our consciences so that we know that **righteousness does not consist in works, although works neither can nor ought to be wanting ...**” (65)



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Matt 7:17 – *“So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.”*

Luke 6:45 – *“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*



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ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Justification and the Role of Good Works

Gal 2:16 – “[W]e 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.”

James 2:21, 24 – “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ...²⁴ You see that **a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.**”



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“As the faith which James condemns is different than the faith that Paul commends, so also the works which James commends are different than the works which Paul condemns.”

– Machen, *The New Testament: An Introduction to Its Literature and History*, 239.

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*“**Faith**, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, **is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.**”*

(Westminster Confession of Faith, 11.2)



Martin Luther (1483–1546)

IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN
BE AGAINST US? (ROM 8:31)

“Although I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true.

Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasant and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches?

I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all things in Christ.” (52)