

S T U D Y G U I D E

Luther and the Reformation

R.C. Sproul



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From Luther to the Lightning Bolt

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Protestants around the world today celebrate their distinction from the Roman Catholic Church proudly and regularly. Yet, how many actually know the history behind their separation? The old adage “you can’t know where you are going until you know from where you came” may not ring true in every situation, but the sorrowful state of biblical orthodoxy in Protestant churches today demonstrates the value of this old proverb. The events culminating in the Reformation of the sixteenth century occurred in response to the dilapidated treatment and understanding of God’s Word extant in the Roman Catholic Church, and in the first lecture of this series, Dr. Sproul introduces the man who challenged the errant status quo and sparked a flame of change that still burns today: Martin Luther.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Leviticus 19:1–4; Psalm 14:1–3; Romans 3:9–20; Ephesians 2:8–10

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To become familiar with the personal events leading up to Luther’s transition into the monastery, particularly his astute grasp of the nature of law and its application in his monastic life.

QUOTATION

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

—Romans 7:18–19

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Roots of the Reformation

- a. The Latin phrase *post tenebras, lux* (“after darkness, light”) comprises the motto of the 16th century Reformation. This “darkness” refers to the church’s understanding of biblical Christianity that had gradually developed during the dark ages through the Medieval era and into the time of the Reformation.
- b. The theology of sacerdotalism dominated the church. Sacerdotalism proposes that salvation occurs chiefly through the ministrations of the church, through the priesthood, and particularly through the administration of the sacraments.
- c. The Reformers responded to this system most emphatically in the 16th century. Nonetheless, they viewed their reaction not as revolutionary, but as a work of reformation, calling the church back to the original forms and theology of the apostolic church.

II. The Roots of Martin Luther

- a. Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, to Hans and Magarethe, former peasants. Hans’ industrious nature led the family from poverty into wealth, and he aspired for his son, Martin, to become a prominent, wealthy lawyer.
- b. From his youth, Luther displayed an aptitude for learning, and he received a Master of Arts degree from the University of Erfurt and enrolled in the law program at the same university. His classical education (in which he learned Latin) as well as his legal studies would assist him mightily for the remainder of his life.
- c. In July of 1505, a lightning bolt nearly struck Luther as he walked home from the university. He cried out, “Help me Saint Anne; I will become a monk.” Interpreting this crisis as a sign from God and wishing to honor his vow, Luther entered the local, rigorous Augustinian monastery, much to his father’s chagrin.
- d. Luther fully committed himself to his monastic duties, seeking to gain passage into heaven through right and rigid monkery. Nonetheless, despite the perpetual exercise of spiritual disciplines, Luther could not ease the guilt he constantly experienced. His legal mind applied the commandments of God meticulously to himself, and he longed to experience real and lasting forgiveness from his ever-present sin. The monastery could offer nothing to assuage his conscience.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Latin phrase *post tenebras, lux* that comprises the motto of the Reformation literally means _____.
 - a. “Light overcomes shadows.”
 - b. “After darkness, light”
 - c. “A return to the truth”
 - d. “The gospel is the light.”

2. The Reformers of the 16th century organized together to revolt against the church and historic Christianity.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. After Luther finished his classical education and a Master of Arts, he enrolled at the university of Erfurt to study _____.
 - a. Philosophy
 - b. Engineering
 - c. Mathematics
 - d. Law

4. Luther responded to the routine question “What do you seek?” administered upon entrance into the monastery with _____.
 - a. “Food and water”
 - b. “God’s grace and mercy”
 - c. “Absolution”
 - d. “Entrance into heaven”

5. Which Czechoslovakian martyr predicted the imminence of a reformer that the Roman Catholic Church could not silence?
 - a. John Wycliffe
 - b. Hugh Latimer
 - c. Nicholas Ridley
 - d. John Hus

6. Luther found lasting solace and comfort in the confessional.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What darkness does the Reformer's motto *post tenebras, lux* have in view?
2. Explain sacerdotalism. How does Scripture handle this theological position? Consult specific biblical texts.
3. How could the 16th century Reformers understand their resistance to the Roman Catholic Church as reformation and not revolution?
4. Read Romans 3:20. What does Paul say about the use of the law in the justification of sinners?
5. In light of the above discussion in question four, why did Luther struggle under the Roman Catholic, monastic understanding of sin and forgiveness?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought*
and *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*.

2

Monastery & Rome Crisis

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The word “holy” gets bandied about often in contemporary culture. Some apply the term to archaic or sacred ideas or items from past civilizations, while others combine it with a noun for use as an impromptu expression of fear or wonder. Unfortunately, the flippant use of this modifier fails to appreciate the proper use of the expression, for only the true, living God, and by extension those people and things He hallows, is holy. Martin Luther grasped this principle astutely. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul expounds on Luther’s inability to reconcile his guilt with the holiness of God through the Roman church’s traditions and practices.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 6:5; 9:20–21; Leviticus 20:7, 26; Psalm 9:9; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 John 1:8–10; Revelation 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To further paint a picture of the wretched situation in which Luther resided, internally and externally, prior to his conversion and stance against the Roman Catholic Church.
2. To highlight the anguish Luther experienced over his guilt before the demands of God’s holy law and the crisis of faith this created within him.

QUOTATION

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!

—Isaiah 6:4–5

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Luther's Early Monastic Life

- a. Scholars from a broad range of disciplines in the 20th century have examined the life and behavior of Luther in order to elucidate the reasons for his stance against the Roman Catholic Church.
- b. In addition to their examination of his singular position of defiance and the vitriolic, colorful language he used to describe his opponents, scholars, psychologists in particular, have been fascinated by the guilt Luther experienced over his sin.
- c. Despite his best efforts, which included lengthy confessions, self-flagellations, and many other rigorous forms of asceticism, Luther could not achieve a peace of mind or quietness of conscience. Despair prevailed within his heart, to the point where he vehemently hated God for the judgment he knew awaited him for his sins.
- d. Luther took Scripture seriously, and, unlike many people, could not deny or rationalize his iniquity. It constantly presented itself to him in clear force, and, knowing the demands of the law of God, Luther feared the divine judgment tremendously. He could not even administer the sacrament of the Eucharist (a prerogative of an ordained priest only), for the thought of being in the presence of the holy Christ (according to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the elements of the Lord's Supper transform into the body and blood of Christ at the proper invocation of the priest) terrified him speechless.

II. Luther's Pilgrimage to Rome

- a. Pilgrimages in the Medieval era constituted an important part of the Christian life according to Roman Catholic tradition. In these pilgrimages, one could receive various indulgences and forgiveness of sins that contributed both to life on earth and purgatory (the process of purification by which the soul is made ready for heaven) by coming into contact with these relics, hallowed remnants of saints.
- b. Luther's monastery awarded him and a colleague the opportunity to travel to Rome, one of the primary destinations for eager pilgrims on account of the abundance and importance of the relics housed in the center of the Roman Catholic Church.
- c. He arrived in Rome in 1511, and he blanched at what he saw. The priesthood practiced every type of corruption imaginable, from extortion to sexual promiscuity, and this display scarred Luther permanently.
- d. Despite his severe disappointment with the state of the clergy, Luther still managed to perform some rites of the pilgrimage, one of which included climbing the sacred

steps of the Lateran church (supposedly the same steps, extracted from Jerusalem by crusaders, Jesus went up on the day of his judgment before Pilate).

- e. After engaging in an elaborate ritual of penance, Luther arrived at the top of the stairs only to experience an extreme sense of doubt over the veracity of the church's beliefs. This doubt would afflict him for the next five years.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Incorporating debating techniques used in his era, Luther called those who disagreed with him _____.
 - a. “bumbling idiots”
 - b. “respected adversaries”
 - c. “dogs”
 - d. “sideshow attractions”
2. Corruption amongst the clergy reached a low point in the 15th and 16th century
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. The best way to ensure personal salvation at the time of Luther was to enter into holy orders, possess a holy vocation, and particularly to enter a monastery.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Luther did not utter the prayer of consecration over the elements of the Eucharist because he _____.
 - a. really believed he stood in the holy presence of Christ, which terrified him
 - b. he forgot the words
 - c. some fellow monks protested loudly
 - d. he didn't believe in transubstantiation
5. Luther and others attempted to achieve indulgences by ascending the sacred steps _____.
 - a. on hands and knees
 - b. on their bellies
 - c. while running swiftly
 - d. in silence
6. Luther enjoyed comfort for his soul as he gained the final stair of the sacred steps?
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why might scholars, psychologists in particular, find the life and behavior of Luther intriguing?
2. Monks of the medieval era (and even before) practiced strict forms of asceticism (the belief that self-denial increases higher spirituality). From where might they get this notion? Were they correct? Explain.
3. How do people commonly rationalize their guilt?
4. How should the Christian respond to the holiness of God, keeping in mind that sin does not dissipate completely during the earthly existence?
5. How would you demonstrate the falsity of venerating relics to a Roman Catholic?
6. Must Christians experience purgatory after physical death? Explain.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

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Tower Experience

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The individualistic, global societies created and propelled by sin operate under the assumption that the fortunes and failures of life result strictly from the decisions and actions of the individual. Human beings are autonomous creatures and independent entities unto themselves. Hence, the notion of imputed righteousness (the application of a foreign righteousness on another) struggles against the grain. Yet, the nature of reality foils this principle at every turn. In each stage of life, we experience the effects of others' actions on our lives in permanent and uncontrollable ways, just as we impose similar effects. In this lesson, Martin Luther comes face to face with the notion of imputed righteousness, a concept previously alien to him while under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 40:9–10; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:16–17; 5:6–11; 1 Corinthians 1:18–25

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe Luther's transference from Erfurt to Wittenberg, in which Luther would experience the third and most remarkable crisis of his life
2. To explain Luther's impact on biblical interpretation
3. To introduce Luther's first exposure to justification by faith alone

QUOTATION

It doesn't matter if you have almost entered into the depths of hell. It does not matter if you are guilty of murder as well as every other vile sin. It does not matter from the standpoint of being justified before God at all. You are no more hopeless than the most moral and respectable person in the world."

—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Luther's Transfer to Wittenberg

- a. Shortly after his return to Erfurt from Rome, Luther transferred to the Augustinian cloister in Wittenberg and joined the faculty of the city's university at the prompting of Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony.
- b. Frederick desired to transform Wittenberg into a religious and intellectual center to rival Rome, and in pursuit of this goal he acquired over 19,000 relics for the reliquary at Wittenberg and some promising scholars for the university, including Luther
- c. Despite the relatively small size of Wittenberg, Frederick wielded great power throughout the Holy Roman Empire. This authority would play a key role in Luther's life.

II. The Beginning of Luther's Professorship in Wittenberg

- a. A master linguist and outstanding interpreter of Scripture, Luther began his tenure at Wittenberg by giving lengthy lectures on the Psalms.
- b. Biblical interpreters of the Middle Ages almost exclusively employed a method called the "quadriga" when interpreting Scripture. The term refers to a chariot or car drawn by four horses abreast, but medieval scholars used this term to describe the fourfold method of interpreting they used. First, they discovered the literal sense of the text; second, the ethical; third, the mystical; and fourth, the allegorical.
- c. Luther despised the imposition of the quadriga on the text, as it resulted in all manner of wild speculation and imaginative interpretation. Instead, he developed a proper method of interpretation he called the *sensus literalis*.
- d. The *sensus literalis* (the "literal sense") seeks to interpret the Bible according to how it is written. It intends to understand Scripture as the original author designed, and it searches for the plain meaning of the text while disdaining mythical, spiritualized interpretations of the Word of God.
- e. In 1515, Luther received the task of lecturing through Romans. When he reached Romans 1:16–17, Luther experienced the third and most important crisis of his young life.
- f. Luther initially revolted at the idea of the "righteousness of God" presented in verse seventeen, for Luther understood that he could not meet the demands of God's righteousness. Yet, upon further reflection, Luther's comprehension of the text changed.

- g. As he read the clause “The righteous shall live by faith,” Luther recognized that the righteousness described must be received passively by faith, not achieved actively. Furthermore, an analysis of the Greek word *dikaiosune* revealed a flaw in the popular understanding of justification. Utilizing the Latin word *justificare* (“to make justified”), the Roman clergy believed God justified human beings through the proper distribution of and participation in the sacraments. *Dikaiosune*, on the contrary, literally means “to declare righteous,” and Luther realized that God declared people righteous on account of their passive reception of the righteousness of another, a righteousness outside of themselves. This alien righteousness belongs to Christ.
- h. This revelation shocked Luther, and he credited this moment as the time at which the Holy Spirit quickened his spirit unto life.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Frederick the Wise possessed the title “Elector of Saxony” because he could cast a vote in the election of the _____.
 - a. Pope
 - b. local lords
 - c. local clergy
 - d. Holy Roman Emperor
2. Luther began his lectures at the university in Wittenberg in the book of _____.
 - a. Proverbs
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Romans
 - d. Philippians
3. The quadriga incorporates four different forms of interpretation. In order they are _____.
 - a. allegorical, ethical, literal, mystical.
 - b. literal, ethical, mystical, allegorical
 - c. ethical, allegorical, mystical, literal
 - d. literal, ethical, allegorical, mystical
4. Luther disdained the *sensus literalis*, instead preferring to interpret the text ethically.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. The word *justificare* illuminated to Luther the passive reception of righteousness in the act of justification.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do some research on the Holy Roman Empire. How did it originate, and in what era did it flourish most? In what condition did it stand at the beginning of the 16th century.
2. Why did the quadriga lead to such errant interpretation in the Middle Ages? What does “allegorical” mean? Why might this method of interpretation lead to such problems?
3. If the original authors of the Bible penned the Word of God thousands of years ago in a foreign place and culture, how might biblical interpreters discover the original meaning of the text? Does that meaning apply today? Explain, paying careful attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in this process.
4. How can God declare anybody righteous?
5. In what ways might worldly culture find the imputation of another’s righteousness impossible or repugnant? How would you respond?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

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Building St. Peters

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Sadly, the church, composed of sinful men and women, does not escape the infiltration of depravity, but it frequently suffers greatly from it. Corruption among officials, particularly high-ranking leaders, has serious ramifications both within and without the church's borders. Today's lesson demonstrates this truth poignantly, and the selling of indulgences and church offices to feed the treasury of the Roman Catholic Church epitomizes the venality that can exist in the heart of men. Nonetheless, Christians possess hope, for God promises to maintain His Spirit among the true members of the invisible church, the body of men and women that participate in the visible church but that truly belong to the Father on account of the Son. This promise will find sure proof in the protests of Martin Luther and his adherents.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 32:1–2; Matthew 16:13–20; Acts 8:9–25; Romans 4:1–8; Ephesians 2:8–10

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize and comprehend the biblical misinterpretation creating indulgences
2. To understand the historical circumstances in the 15th and 16th century that spurred the rampant sale of indulgences in Germany, against which Martin Luther would eventually protest

QUOTATION

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages. . . . But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.

Jeremiah 22:13, 17

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Papal Corruption in the Time of Luther

- a. Two particular corrupt popes presided over the Roman Catholic Church during Luther's tenure in the Augustinian monastic order: Julius II and Leo X.
- b. Julius II, nicknamed the "Fearsome pope" and the "Warrior pope," attempted a number of ambitious enterprises during his time as the Roman Pontiff. Aside from his expansionist tendencies, Julius desired to build a new cathedral for the bishop of Rome, a grand basilica (named "St. Peter's") to rival the Parthenon and to house the remains of the apostles Peter and Paul. However, shortly after the laying of the footers, Julius died
- c. His successor, Leo X, proved a horrible replacement, and under his leadership the church experienced further corruption and even fell to the brink of bankruptcy. Naturally, the building of St. Peter's stalled.
- d. Around the same time as Leo X, a young, German prince of the Hohenzollern line named Prince Albert of Brandenburg was attempting to become the most powerful cleric in all of Germany. Through the nefarious practice of simony (purchasing an office in the church), young Albert had already purchased two bishoprics even though canon law clearly stipulated that no bishop could possess more than one bishopric. Furthermore, Albert had not reached the appropriate age demanded by canon law for a bishop.
- e. When an archbishopric opened in the large city of Mainz, Albert immediately jumped at the opportunity to acquire it. After some haggling with financially incapable Pope Leo X, Albert attained the position for 10,000 gold ducats, and Leo X further granted him permission to distribute indulgences throughout Germany to pay off the loan needed to make the purchase.

II. The Nature of Indulgences

- a. According to Roman Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16, the Roman pontiff, as the successor of the apostle Peter and Vicar of Christ, possessed the keys of the kingdom. The keys granted the pope access to the treasury of merit, the depository of all the merits earned by Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the original apostles, and the canonized saints.
- b. According to Roman Catholic dogma, a person may only enter heaven if he or she is inherently righteous, possessing no blemish from a mortal or venial sin. If an individual dies with residual sin, having not performed the necessary amount of merit to cover those blemishes, he must enter into purgatory, a place of purging.

- c. This doctrine of merit encouraged those who did not possess inherent righteousness to seek to lessen the gap, else a lengthy time in the purging fires of purgatory awaited. However, certain individuals, such as Jesus, his family, the original apostles, and other saints, not only possessed inherent righteousness, but they performed acts of obedience beyond the commands of God. They carried out works of supererogation, works over and above their duties. The merit earned for this behavior filtered into the treasury of merit, which the pope alone controlled as possessor of the keys to the kingdom.
- d. The papacy doled out this merit through the granting of indulgences, which individuals could achieve by performing acts of penance, particularly almsgiving. While canon law denied this activity as the crass selling of forgiveness, the practice of granting indulgences in Germany soon resembled it as Pope Leo's agents marketed them. This scandal provoked Luther to action.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Roman Catholic historians regard Popes Julius II and Leo X as paragons of papal propriety
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. From which individual does the word "simony" derive?
 - a. Simon Peter
 - b. Simon the Cyrene
 - c. Simon Magus
 - d. Simon Ben Hur
3. Prince Albert purchased the archbishopric of Mainz for 7,000 gold ducats
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes three types of merit. They are called _____.
 - a. condign, congruous, and supererogatory merit
 - b. condign, congruous, and irrigation merit
 - c. complementary, superfluous, and exemplary merit
 - d. condign, juxtaposed, and supererogatory merit
5. Indulgences involved a kind of imputation.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 8:9–25. In light of this passage, explain the ramifications for the practice of simony. What does Simon Magus' response to Peter's denunciation indicate?
2. Should the church allocate a large amount of funds for the beautification of its grounds and sanctuaries? Explain and defend your answer.
3. To whom does Jesus give the keys of the kingdom? Is the Roman Catholic Church correct on its interpretation of Jesus' statement "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church"? Why or why not?
4. Do the keys of the kingdom really grant access to a treasury of merit? If yes, explain further. If not, to what do these keys have access?
5. What place does merit have in the Christian life?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

5

Indulgence Controversy

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Theological disputation occurs frequently within the confines of the church. At times, differences among brothers and sisters in Christ lead to divisive splits and even animosity, which generally burgeons on account of poor behavior and a less than gentle spirit. In today's lesson, we witness the watershed moment from which the Protestant Reformation would flow. Nonetheless, we see Martin Luther expressing his contention with the marketing techniques of Johannes Tetzel in a humble manner. Contrary to popular belief, Luther did not rail bombastically against the Roman church upon hearing about the selling of indulgences, but he desired to address the issue in the proper forum with reasonable decorum. Although the Lord had other ideas for Luther, we can learn a valuable lesson both from Luther's propriety and the historical events surrounding him.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Leviticus 19:17; Galatians 2:11–21; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:9–18; James 5:19–20

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the events prompting Luther to nail the 95 Theses on the doors of the church of Wittenberg, his intentions and mindset, and the consequent fallout
2. To comprehend Luther's preliminary biblical and theological positions against indulgences and some other errors extant in the Roman church

QUOTATION

You should know: whoever has confessed and is contrite and puts alms into the box, as his confessor counsels him, will have all of his sins forgiven. . . . So why are you standing about idly? Run, all of you, for the salvation of your souls.

—Johannes Tetzel

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Distribution of Indulgences in Germany

- a. Although Prince Albert possessed the exclusive rights to sell and profit from indulgences throughout Germany, he could not proffer indulgences in certain, prohibited areas of Germany, which included Saxony. Frederick the Wise forbade that practice within the confines of his authority.
- b. Johannes Tetzel, a Dominican monk, oversaw the distribution and marketing of indulgences in Germany. He presented his product with much creativity and pagantry, compelling people, including residents of Wittenberg in Saxony, to travel far and wide to purchase indulgences.

II. Luther's Response

- a. In response to Tetzel's marketing strategies and modes of communication, Luther penned 95 theses in clear, terse language in protest to the corruption involved in the sale of indulgences. He aimed his contentions against Tetzel and his misrepresentation of the church, and at noonday on All Hallows Eve, he marched with his friend Agricola to the doors of the church at Wittenberg and nailed the 95 Theses upon them.
- b. Luther wrote the theses in the academic language of Latin in order to instigate a discussion among the faculty at the university behind closed doors. Yet, no academician responded to his invitation, and, much to Luther's dismay, some students in the town translated the theses into the vernacular and disseminated them throughout all of Germany.

III. The Immediate Aftermath

- a. In an attempt to placate Prince Albert, Luther wrote an exposition of each of the theses in calmer language. Yet, Tetzel also contacted Albert with complaints against Luther's interference.
- b. Luther's endeavor did not mollify Albert, and he sent copies of Luther's exposition and theses along to Rome in protest against Luther.
- c. Although the pope initially dismissed Luther's actions as of no consequence, the increasing tension between the Dominican and Augustinian monastic orders, the heightened tension in Wittenberg, and the call for Luther's arraignment by various individuals motivated the pope to bring him to Rome for trial. Nonetheless, Frederick the Wise interceded for Luther and the pope relinquished his order.

IV. Luther's Debate at Heidelberg

- a. Luther's main contention lay against the matter of indulgences and the treasury of merit upon which it rested.
- b. Furthermore, Luther despised Tetzels presentation of indulgences, and he believed it fostered attrition (repentance motivated by fear of punishment and hell) as opposed to contrition (repentance motivated by deep, serious sorrow for having offended God by sinning).
- c. Three significant meetings followed Luther's posting of the 95 Theses, and these meetings would play a huge part in Luther's eventual stand.
- d. The first took place in April of 1518 in Heidelberg, Germany. This debate poised the Dominicans against the Augustinians over the issue of nominalism and realism. Luther represented the Augustinian faculty of Wittenberg, and during the debate he stole the show. Not only did he present some of his early concepts about the theology of the cross, but he also demonstrated amazing acumen and modesty in all the issues approached.
- e. Luther continued to hear word from Rome concerning his theological stances, and he requested opportunities for public debate with representatives of Rome in order to resolve these issues.
- f. Due in large part to the intercession of Frederick the Wise, Luther would receive his chance in two forums: one in Augsburg and the other in Leipzig.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Prince Albert and the Roman Catholic Church believed indulgences depended on the act of giving alms alone.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. When Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the doors of the church at Wittenberg, he scandalously vandalized church property.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Luther wrote the 95 Theses in Latin because he desired _____.
 - a. to look smarter than he was
 - b. to get everyone in the town involved
 - c. to address the educated faculty of Wittenberg
 - d. to make a poignant strike against the Roman church

4. Luther argued at Heidelberg that the church gotten caught up with _____.
 - a. its own self-exaltation
 - b. biblical interpretation
 - c. expansionism
 - d. politics

5. Martin Bucer, a young Dominican monk who would eventually play an important role on the life of John Calvin, was repulsed at Luther's brash and inappropriate debating techniques.
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. How many significant meetings would Luther engage in leading up to the Diet of Worms?
 - a. Two
 - b. Three
 - c. Four
 - d. Five

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the practice of giving alms. Does this activity find support in the Bible? Defend and support your answer. Should Christians give alms today? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree with Luther's particular response to Tetzels practices? Why or why not?
3. How do our actions affect others in ways we might not recognize immediately?
4. Does attrition have a place in the Christian life? Explain.
5. What are the proper channels and methods for resolving disputes within the church? Outside of the church? How does personal conduct play a role in these engagements?
6. Explain the theology of the cross and its importance for the Christian and the Christian life. Refer to Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:9-18.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*
Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*
Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

6

Progress to Worms

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Persecution has existed among the people of God since the beginning of time, most notably with the murder of Abel at the hands of his brother Cain. This suffering does not occur randomly or without reason, but men and women take stands for their God under His sovereign ordination and for His glory. Martin Luther faced trials of this nature many times during his monastic life, but it all came to a crescendo at the Diet of Worms. His response and faith in the face of opposition demonstrates the truth of God's assertion that He will never present before us a task too difficult or big for us to handle.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 37; Mark 13:3–13; Acts 20:17–38; James 1:2–8, 12–18; 1 Peter 4:12–19; 2 Peter 2:4–9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the maneuvering of the Roman Catholic Church and Luther's interaction with it leading up to the pivotal stage of the Diet of Worms
2. To grasp the complexities of the Diet of Worms and the angst Luther experienced during the trial

QUOTATION

Since you've asked me to respond plainly and without horns, I will do so. Unless I'm convinced by sacred Scripture or by evident reason, I cannot recant for my conscience is held captive by the word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.

—Martin Luther

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Luther at Augsburg

- a. In 1518, Rome sent its emissary, Cardinal Cajetan, to Augsburg and requested Luther meet with him to discuss the theological and ecclesiastical issues with which Luther differed.
- b. Despite the promise of safety issued by the pope, Luther's friends, fearing for his life, warned him against going. Yet, Luther believed his opportunity to debate reasonably the matters of contention had arrived, and he ignored the advice of his friends and proceeded to Augsburg.
- c. While in Augsburg, Luther had four interviews with Cajetan, and none of them went well. Cajetan used the opportunity to maneuver Luther into a corner, forcing Luther to admit that he denied both the validity of the selling of indulgences and the treasury of merit authorized and supported by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300 and Pope Clement VI in 1343, respectively. Luther challenged these two popes on biblical grounds, stating that no evidence existed in Scripture to support indulgences or the treasury of merit. Therefore, Boniface and Clement must have erred.
- d. Luther's position rejected the accepted, if not official, doctrine of papal infallibility, and after the interviews Luther barely escaped with his life from the clutches of the enraged Cajetan.

II. Luther at Leipzig

- a. Luther's interviews at Augsburg and the consequent accusations of heresy prompted the Roman church to invite him to a debate at Leipzig with John Eck, the chief Roman Catholic theologian in Germany.
- b. During their disputation, Eck managed, like Cajetan, to trap Luther. He forced Luther to concur with John Huss' position that Scripture alone bound the Christian conscience. Since Huss disagreed with the church council that condemned him, by extension Luther believed the council had erred in its position and sentence of Huss. Hence, Luther believed both the pope and church councils possessed the capacity to err, a belief not extant among the higher officers of Roman Catholic clergy. (Infallible authority must exist in at least one of these, according to Roman Catholic sentiment).
- c. In response to reports about Luther's answers, Pope Leo X issued a papal bull (authoritative edict) against Luther condemning him as a heretic and ordered his written works burned. Upon the bull's arrival at Wittenberg, Luther retaliated by burning the document.

III. The Imperial Diet of Worms

- a. When the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian, heard of this tumult, he became enraged with Luther and determined to get involved. Nonetheless, he died, and his new successor, Charles of Spain (supported by Frederick the Wise), inherited the upheaval.
- b. Charles called for an Imperial Diet (a trial of sorts overseen by the Emperor) in 1521 at the city of Worms to resolve the situation.
- c. Luther's friends, convinced that the "devils" attending the diet would overtake him, pleaded with him once again to abstain from attending. Nevertheless, Luther determined to attend the diet in hopes of debating his position, and he and his friends traveled to Worms among much fanfare from the local population.
- d. When the diet commenced, Luther did not receive any chance to debate. A representative of the church named Eck (different from John Eck) commanded him to recant before the emperor and the papal legates the totality of his writings, which they had conveniently assembled in the hall before him.
- e. Due to the large corpus of his writings, Luther requested to know which writing he must revoke and why. Eck did not answer the question but bade him deny the totality of his works in a straightforward renunciation. With silence filling the hall, Luther responded inaudibly. Yet, at further prompting, he requested and received twenty-four hours to contemplate his decision.
- f. That night, Luther prayed fervently, and the next morning he stood before the emperor and the papal legates and boldly maintained his position. His conscience held captive by the Word of God, Luther could not deny what he perceived so clearly in Scripture. This stand formed the watershed moment of the Protestant Reformation.
- g. After the explosion that followed, Luther's friends whisked him away in a staged kidnapping to Wartburg Castle, where he worked for a year translating the New Testament into German under the disguise of a knight, Sir Jörg.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Cardinal Cajetan trapped Luther into denying the unofficial, yet widely accepted, doctrine of _____.
 - a. inerrancy of Scripture
 - b. canonization
 - c. transubstantiation
 - d. papal infallibility

2. Pope Clement VI wrote a papal encyclical called *Unigenitus* in which he developed and authorized the doctrine of the treasure of merit.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. The doctrine of papal infallibility was not decreed officially until Vatican I, which occurred in _____.
 - a. 1556
 - b. 1673
 - c. 1701
 - d. 1870

4. John Huss was convicted by a church council at the Council of _____.
 - a. Nicea
 - b. Worms
 - c. Constance
 - d. Helsingborg

5. *Exsurge Domine*, the Latin phrase beginning the papal bull condemning Luther as a heretic, means _____.
 - a. "Expunge the heretic"
 - b. "Wipe him out, O Lord"
 - c. "Rise up, O Lord"
 - d. "Praise the Father"

6. Luther barely arrived in Worms due to the hostility he met from the local peasants surrounding the city and dwelling in the countryside.
 - a. True
 - b. False

7. Luther uttered this famous sentence in response to the diets prompting to recant.
 - a. "You are the heretics."
 - b. "Here I stand."
 - c. "A pox upon you."
 - d. "I will do as you say."

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If Luther had refused to attend any of the interviews or debates to which he received summons, would he have been committing a sin? Explain. If Luther had recanted his works, would this recantation condemn him eternally? Once again, explain.
2. Similar to the previous question, how should a Christian respond to persecution, particularly that persecution that demands recantation of his faith at the penalty of death?
3. How would you respond to the doctrine of papal infallibility or the infallibility of church councils? Where does infallible authority exist in the Christian life? Consult passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16–17.
4. From what verse does the phrase “There is a wild boar loose in your vineyard” derive? What does the phrase mean, and what does it mean within the context of the biblical passage?
5. What place does the state have in the affairs of the church? What about vice versa?
6. Do Christians experience assaults from Satan, or is this simply a medieval concept? Expound.
7. If Luther had perished at the hands of the diet, would this prove that God did not answer his prayers? How do God and human suffering relate? Support your answers biblically.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

7

Roman Catholic View of Justification (Part 1)

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many members of the Protestant church today do not understand properly their origins and the nature of their predecessors “protest” against the Roman Catholic Church. When asked about the respective differences, they may respond with some stereotypical answers such as, “I don’t worship Mary,” “I believe in justification by faith, not works,” or “The bread and wine of the Lord’s supper don’t really turn into the body of Jesus.” In this lesson, Dr. Sproul explains the real, serious points of doctrine at stake during Martin Luther’s timeframe and the Reformation, paying careful attention to the doctrine of justification and its place in Roman Catholic thought.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 17:1–14; Romans 6:1–7; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:13–14; Titus 3:1–7; James 2:14–26; 5:16

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification and the place of merit in it

QUOTATION

When the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely, these words are to be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed them, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, “without which it is impossible to please God” and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things

that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, “if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise,” as the Apostle says, “grace is no more grace.”

Therefore, to men justified in this manner, whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost, are to be pointed out the words of the Apostle: “Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name”; and “Do not lose confidence, which hath a great reward.” Hence, to those who work well “unto the end” and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their good works and merits.

—The Council of Trent

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Meaning of the Word *Justification*

- a. Luther asserted that the doctrine of justification by faith alone forms the article by which the church stands or falls. This doctrine divided the church, and, therefore, it merits careful attention and analysis.
- b. As noted earlier, part of the problem surrounding justification involves the word itself. The early Latin fathers, using the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, developed their understanding of justification from the Roman legal system and the literal interpretation of the Latin word *justificare*, which means “to make righteous.” Consequently, the question arose: how is an unrighteous person, a fallen sinner, made righteous?
- c. Out of this position, Roman Catholic clergymen developed an order of salvation in which justification followed sanctification (literally “to make holy”).
- d. Protestant scholars, using the Greek version of the New Testament, developed their understanding of justification from the translation of the word *dikaioisune*, which means “to declare righteous.” As a result, they inverted justification and sanctification in the order of salvation. This difference developed early in the Reformation.

II. Justification and the Sacraments

- a. As mentioned earlier, according to Roman Catholic dogma justification occurs through the operation and proper use of the sacraments. Hence, justification begins with the first sacrament: baptism.
- b. Although the Roman Catholic Church denies that baptism automatically places an individual in a state of grace (for the recipient must not possess hostility toward

this state), it possesses a high view of baptism to bring an individual into this state because the baptism infuses grace.

- c. Using quantitative language, the Roman Catholic Church claims that baptism pours grace into the soul of the individual, after which the person must cooperate and assent (*cooperare et assentare*) to this infusion. If the individual does so, he or she enters into a mutable state of grace.

III. Justification and Sin

- a. According to Rome, justification does not guarantee salvation, but Christians may still fall from their state of grace. While not all sins cast one from the seat of grace (venial sins), mortal sins bring death to the state of justification (contrary to Protestant biblical interpretation).
- b. What happens if a baptized Christian in a state of grace commits a mortal sin? Despite the fall from grace, an antidote exists in the form of another sacrament: penance.
- c. Penance possesses many components, but the main issue lies in satisfaction. Roman Catholic doctrine states that in order to attain and maintain a state of grace, an individual must possess faith, grace, and merit. Penance ensures that Christians keep or regain their inherent righteousness through congruous works of merit. These actions make it only fitting (i.e. congruous) that God would restore a person to a state of grace and inherent righteousness.
- d. Luther vehemently denied any place for merit and satisfaction in his scheme of justification by faith alone. Nonetheless, as stated earlier, faith does hold a place in in the Roman Catholic system of justification, which will receive attention in the next lesson.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The word *justificare* means _____.
 - a. “to justify”
 - b. “to make righteous”
 - c. “to dispense justice”
 - d. “to have just concern”
2. Protestant biblical interpreters used the Greek translation of the New Testament to arrive at a different understanding of justification.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. In the Roman Catholic order of salvation, justification precedes sanctification.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. *Ex opere operato* means _____.
 - a. “the right opportunity”
 - b. “the working of the work”
 - c. “the primary operation”
 - d. “the proper work”

5. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, baptism infuses the soul with a quantitative amount of grace with which the individual must cooperate.
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. A venial sin results in a fall from grace.
 - a. True
 - b. False

7. Absolution by a priest is followed by confession and contrition, both elements of penance.
 - a. True
 - b. False

8. The Bible warns Christians against confessing their sins to other Christians.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do Christians get bogged down in secondary and tertiary doctrinal matters? If so, why does this occur and what steps should Christians take to avoid this? Use examples in your answer.

2. What benefits does a biblical scholar possess when using the original languages of Scripture? What pitfalls does this activity avoid? Is using the vernacular (the common language) wrong? Expound.

3. According to Protestant interpretation, what is baptism and what does it do? Utilize Scripture in your answer.

4. What are the sacraments according to Protestant interpretation? What purpose do they have in the Christian life?

5. Do works have any place in the arena of justification? Explain. Do we cooperate at all in the order of salvation?
6. Can a Christian fall from grace? Is there an unforgivable sin? Defend your answers from Scripture.
7. Why does James 5:16 exhort Christians to confess their sins to one another?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

Roman Catholic View of Justification (Part 2)

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Would it surprise you to learn that current Roman Catholic doctrine declares all Protestants accursed? Remarkably, if probed, most Protestants would respond in disbelief to this proposition. Yet, it holds true, and the Roman church maintains the same stance today as it took in the sixteenth century at the Council of Trent. The major area of dispute at the council regarded the doctrine of justification, notably the role of faith in it. A thorough, clear understanding of justification remains imperative for a proper understanding of the differences between historic Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and Dr. Sproul provides this clarification in today's lesson.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 15; Romans 1:17; 3:21–5:21; 8:33–34; 10:18–13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:6–10; 3:24; 1 John 1:9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the importance of the sixteenth century Council of Trent for Roman Catholic doctrine
2. To comprehend the position of faith in the Roman Catholic system of justification

QUOTATION

The real reason why the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone is unpopular is that it is grievously wounding to our pride.

—John R. W. Stott

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Council of Trent and Its Legacy

- a. In response to the theological explosion caused by the doctrine of justification, the Roman Catholic Church called a major ecumenical council in the middle of the sixteenth century. It took place at the city of Trento in Italy, and this ecumenical council presented the official Roman Catholic decrees on justification, decrees still extant and relevant today on account of the Roman church's triumphant view on the immutable authority of the church and tradition.
- b. Held over many sessions and addressing a multitude of issues, the Council of Trent addressed the doctrine of justification during the sixth session. The council developed a number of canons branding the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone as heretical and anathema (cursed).
- c. This condemnation attacked a fundamental tenet of the gospel message, effectively eliminating any hope for unity amongst Protestants and Roman Catholics on account of this foundational gospel difference.

II. The Council of Trent and Justification

- a. The council clearly taught that faith forms a necessary condition for justification.
- b. Faith possesses three elements or steps: the *initium* (faith begins as the starting point of justification), the *fundamentum* (faith serves as the fundamental, foundational structure upon which justification lies), and the *rodex* (faith is the radical core of justification). Accordingly, justification cannot follow without faith.
- c. Nonetheless, faith, although a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition, meaning that if the condition of faith exists, it will not in and of itself produce the desired result (similar to oxygen and its part in the starting and maintaining a fire).
- d. A Christian may fall from the state of grace, losing justification, but still retaining faith. This demonstrates the insufficiency of faith for justification in the Roman Catholic system.
- e. What is the instrumental cause of justification? The council designated the sacrament of baptism as the instrument, the tool, by which an individual enters in a justified state of grace. This stance repulsed the Reformers, for they believed entrance into a state of grace occurred through the instrument of faith alone, not faith and a sacrament.

- f. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church upholds an analytical view of justification. An analytical statement is inherently true. Therefore, while both Protestants and Roman Catholics may agree that God must declare an individual justified for justification to occur, the analytical view demands that the person already possess an inherent righteousness worthy of the declaration. God must see perfect righteousness to declare perfect righteousness.
- g. This position instigated a response by the Reformers because they could not reconcile with Scripture or their own conscience this unbearable burden placed on the individual through the analytical view.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The decrees of the Council of Trent hold no place in Roman Catholic doctrine and practice today.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Some of the canons in the sixth session of the council referring to justification misunderstood the position of the reformers and consequently did not condemn them.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. In the Roman Catholic system of justification, faith is _____.
 - a. an arbitrary component of justification
 - b. a sufficient condition for justification
 - c. a necessary condition for justification
 - d. a tertiary component for justification
4. According to Roman Catholicism, if one commits a mortal sin, faith _____.
 - a. necessarily evaporates too
 - b. may continue to exist in the believer
 - c. was absolutely never extant in the individual
 - d. is the only way to restore the individual to grace
5. The Roman Catholic Church has a complex system of causation, and this results primarily from whose influence?
 - a. Plato
 - b. Xenocrates
 - c. Aristotle
 - d. Socrates

6. The Roman Catholic Church takes an analytical view towards justification.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role do councils play in the Protestant church today? What is the nature and extent of their authority? Does the Bible give precedent for the use of these devices? Explain.
2. Should Protestants engage in ecumenical forums and treatises with the Roman Catholic Church or other sects if disagreements about fundamental aspects of the gospel exist? Expound and support your position from Scripture.
3. How will someone live and operate under the belief that his eternal salvation may slip away if he sins?
4. Defend justification by faith alone from a Scriptural standpoint. Does the book of James aid or hinder your case? Explain.
5. Can a Christian ever achieve inherent righteousness at any stage of life apart from Christ? If so, how? If not, why?
6. Does the Roman Catholic system of justification hold an allure to you? Why or why not?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* and
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.

Protestant View of Justification

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many people in contemporary culture shrink at the idea of double imputation inherent in the Protestant understanding of justification. That God would place others' sins on His own Son while simultaneously declaring the guilty righteous on account of the merit of Christ defies reason and creates a form of "cosmic child abuse," they say. Yet, this position demonstrates a serious flaw in reasoning, for the Father does not abuse His Son. On the contrary, our own wrongdoing rests upon Christ's shoulders at the cross, and He bears this burden willingly for the sake of His flock. Furthermore, a position against double imputation seriously underestimates the love of God for His children, a love, as Dr. Sproul will show in this lesson, that rips sinners from an immutable place of despair and brings them into salvation.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 15; Acts 15; Romans 1:17; 3:21–5:21; 8:33–34; 10:18–13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:6–10; 3:24; 1 John 1:9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand the Protestant doctrine of justification in contradistinction to the Roman Catholic position

QUOTATION

And Luther was the man who, guided by experience in the life of his own soul, again made people understand the original and true meaning of the gospel of Christ. Like the "righteousness of God," so the term "penitence" had been for him one of the most bitter words of Holy Scripture. But when from Romans 1:17 he learned to know a "righteousness by faith," he also learned "the true manner of penitence." He then understood that the repentance demanded in Matthew 4:17 had nothing to do with the

works of satisfaction required in the Roman institution of confession, but consisted in “a change of mind in true interior contrition” and with all its benefits was itself a fruit of grace.

—Herman Bavinck

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. *Sola Fide* and the Protestant Understanding of Justification

- a. *Sola fide* means “by faith alone,” and this phrase represents the fundamental difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism that created the epic stir in the sixteenth century. The five *solas*, including *sola fide*, point to the central importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- b. Reformed Protestants proclaim that faith in Christ and his activity alone provides justification and from this justification arises works. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, avers that faith plus works equals justification

II. The Doctrine of Imputation

- a. How can anyone stand before the demands and the presence of a holy, righteous God, for, as Paul says, all have sinned and fall short of His glory in their unrighteousness? (See Romans 3.)
- b. In contrast to the Roman Catholic analytical view of justification, which maintains that God may only declare an individual righteous if he already possesses an inherent righteousness, the Reformation view designates justification as synthetic. When God declares an individual just in His sight, He does not do so on account of something inherent in the person but based on something added to him. This addition is the righteousness of Christ, a righteousness Luther called *extra nos* (outside of us) and labeled as *justitia aliena* (an alien righteousness).
- c. The doctrine of imputation comes into this mix and increases the schism between Reformation and Roman Catholic thought.
- d. Using Abraham as an example, the apostle Paul explains that despite the presence of sin in the life of Abraham, God declared him righteous because he believed in the promise. God imputed to him Christ’s righteousness, legally transferring Christ’s righteousness and applying it to Abraham on account of faith.
- e. Hence, Luther coined the phrase *simul justus et peccator*: “simultaneously righteous and sinner.” From one perspective, Christians are sinners. Yet, from another, Christians are considered righteous by God on account of the imputation of Christ’s

righteousness. This forms the heart of the gospel, and allows for the reconciliation of man to God.

- f. Double imputation, the transfer of a Christian's sin onto Christ and Christ's righteousness onto him, stands at the heart of the Reformation, and upon this article the church either stands or falls. Naturally, the Roman Catholic Church would not stay quiet in response to this divergence.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Reformers developed _____ *solas* pointing to the central importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone
 - a. two
 - b. five
 - c. ten
 - d. fourteen
2. Roman Catholicism and the Reformers agreed on the necessity of _____.
 - a. faith
 - b. faith alone
 - c. transubstantiation
 - d. purgatory
3. Justification does not require the fulfillment of the works of the Law.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. The Reformers employed an analytical view for their system of justification.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Paul uses the patriarch _____ as a model of justification by faith despite the presence of sin.
 - a. Abraham
 - b. Isaac
 - c. Jacob
 - d. Joseph
6. *Simul justus et peccator* means _____.
 - a. "Simultaneously just and righteous"
 - b. "Simultaneously eating while talking"
 - c. "Simultaneously just and sinner"
 - d. "Simulating the just and not the sinner"

7. Justification by faith alone represents just one way to attain eternal salvation.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a review, explain the difference between a necessary and a sufficient condition for justification.
2. What is the good news of the gospel?
3. Name some essential doctrines of the gospel on which no Christian should waver or compromise. Support your list with Scripture.
4. What place do the works of the Law have in the process of justification?
5. Why do people, professing Christians and secularists alike, struggle so much with the doctrine of imputation? What does this tell us about human nature?
6. How can God declare someone righteous if that person sins and continues to sin after God's declaration? Use examples and Scripture to support your answer.
7. Does God compromise His integrity in the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Explain.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought and The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World.*

Rome's Objections Answered

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Secular culture and even some professing evangelicals often describe God as an all-forgiving, cuddly being intent on accepting all people from all walks of life into his ever-accepting arms. As such, it advocates freedom to act in whatever way feels right, for if God is a god of love, surely He will never discriminate. This picture misses the mark absolutely. On the contrary, the heavenly Lord of Hosts demands rigid moral discipline from His creation. Although God alone acts in the justification of His children, after they enter into a state of grace, He requires that they cooperate and fulfill his mandates and laws. Dr. Sproul explores the consequences of entering into a state of grace by the process of justification in this final lesson on Luther and the Reformation.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 15; 22:1–19; Psalm 51:17; Habakkuk 2:4; Acts 15; Romans 1:17; 3:21–5:21; 8:33–34; 10:18–13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:6–10; 3:24; James 2:14–26; 1 John 1:9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the Roman Catholic response to the Protestant declaration of justification by faith alone
2. To recognize the depth of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and its legitimacy and biblical validity in the face of scrutiny

QUOTATION

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which is the only medium of our reconciliation to God. But this [justification] you cannot attain, without at the same time attaining to sanctification. . . . Christ therefore justifies no one whom he does not also sanctify. For these benefits are perpetually

and indissolubly connected, so that whom he illuminates with his wisdom, them he redeems; whom he redeems, he justifies; whom he justifies, he sanctifies. . . . Since, then, the Lord affords us the enjoyment of these blessings only in the bestowment of himself, he gives them [justification and sanctification] both together, and never one without the other. Thus we see how true it is that we are justified, not without works, yet not by works; since union with Christ, by which we are justified, contains sanctification as well as righteousness.

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The First Objection to Justification by Faith Alone

- a. Rome's first objection to the Protestant Reformation's assertions regarding justification by faith alone consisted of a charge of antinomianism against the Reformers. This challenge accused Protestants of living willful sinful, ungodly lives while still claiming perseverance in the state of grace.
- b. The Reformers responded by claiming that justification by faith alone does not engender a faith devoid from works. On the contrary, every true Christian must possess the three elements that compose saving faith: *notitia*, which refers to the intellectual knowledge of the content of the person and work of Christ; *assensus*, which demands that Christians not just know the facts about the gospel but also assent to and believe in their veracity; and *fiducia*, which calls the Christian to put their personal trust in Jesus as the Savior from their sins. These components of saving faith differ from, say, the assent given by Satan and his demons in that the true Christian recognizes and joyfully assents to the sweetness, loveliness, and excellency of Jesus Christ the Messiah.
- c. Furthermore, saving faith only occurs from the regeneration instigated and completed by the works of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Second Objection to Justification by Faith Alone

- a. Rome also proclaimed that this declaration of righteousness given by God as described by the Reformers could only be fictional, for how could God declare a sinner righteous?
- b. Protestants responded to this objection clearly and succinctly. God may declare people righteousness on account of the real righteousness of Christ imputed on them. Fiction doesn't even enter the equation.

III. The Third Objection to Justification by Faith Alone

- a. Rome utilized the teaching of the book of James as the most significant instrument in their refutation of the Protestant Reformation.
- b. The Roman legates cited James 2 and the declaration “You see then the man is justified by works and not by faith alone” as the crux of their refutation. Clearly, they argued, faith alone did not stand up to the scrutiny of Scripture, and, therefore, merit possessed more of a place in the process of justification that Protestants allowed.
- c. Yet, Romans 3–5 seems to contradict James 2, in that Paul frequently speaks about justification by faith alone.
- d. Since the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture excludes the possibility of contradiction, reconciliation between both texts must exist.
- e. Both James and Paul use the same word (*dikaiosune*) for justification and point to the same patriarch (Abraham) as their model.
- f. Two considerations arise in solving this difficulty. First, Paul references Genesis 15 in his evaluation of Abraham’s justification, while James uses the account found in Genesis 22 for his discussion. Hence, according to this timeline, Abraham already exists in a justified state prior to his interaction with Isaac in the preceding chapters of Genesis.
- g. Second, the real resolution of the problem arrives when a proper examination of the respective questions addressed by the apostles occurs. In 2:14 of his work, James does not mean to speak about the process of justification, but he is concerned with confirmation and proof of true justification. According to James, a true faith produces works of righteousness as an outpouring of the Spirit and gratitude, which in turn verify the existence of a real faith. All Protestants agree with this notion, and Luther labeled this faith a *fides viva*, a vital, living faith. These works do not contribute to justification but flow out of it.
- h. Paul, on the other hand, used the term justification in the highest theological sense of the term, and he desired to demonstrate the role of faith in producing justification in his letter to the Romans. Faith alone, instituted in the heart of the individual by the Holy Spirit, results in God’s declaration of righteousness.
- i. Therefore, while both Paul and James speak about justification, they do so for different purposes: Paul to explain how salvation is accomplished, and James to show that a true, living faith produces works identifiable before others.

- j. Although this truth remains simple, it forms the cornerstone of the gospel, and the call for total dependence on God compelled the Reformers to constantly proclaim *solī deo Gloria*: “To God alone is the glory,” for salvation belong to Him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Roman Catholic Church declared five major issues of contention against the Reformers and their doctrine of justification.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. The Roman church accused the Protestant Reformers of _____ in their doctrine of justification
 - a. fatalism
 - b. antinomianism
 - c. pelagianism
 - d. nestorianism

3. According to the Reformers, saving faith possess three elements. They are _____.
 - a. *notitia, assensus, and dimensia.*
 - b. *notitia, assensus, and fiducia*
 - c. *justus, assensus, and fiducia*
 - d. *notitia, justus, and fiducia*

4. Edwards defined the will as the mind choosing.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. The Roman Catholic Church objected to the analytical view of God’s declaration of justification held by the Protestant Reformers.
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. Luther questioned the canonicity of James, calling it an epistle of straw.
 - a. True
 - b. False

7. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, wrote about the acquisition of salvation in the process of justification, while James addressed the _____.
 - a. outflow of works from faith
 - b. the salvation of men through works
 - c. the merit scale
 - d. theology of triumphalism

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does “easy-believism” exist among Christians today? Defend your answer, and if yes, how would you attempt to change this status?
2. Of the three elements of saving faith, which elements do Satan and his demons possess? Why do they persist in their position of condemnation? How do the unregenerate compare?
3. Does true Christian belief involve activity of the mind? The emotions? Explain your answer using Scripture.
4. Can a Christian ever be at true enmity with God? Can a Christian live the life of an unbeliever yet still exist in a state of grace? Explain your answers.
5. Does Scripture contradict itself? If it appears to do so, what might be the problem? What steps should be taken to reconcile the passages?
6. What do the actions of individuals indicate about their position in the state of grace? Should Christians judge others? Explain.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

Godfrey, Robert. *Reformation Sketches*

Nichols, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought*
and *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*.

