

I. Set Up

A. Welcome / Intro / Guests

B. Monday is the 499th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, which is a big deal because Martin Luther's decision to nail his 95 complaints on the door of the castle in Wittenberg set in motion a series of events that changed the world – not just the church, but politics, culture, the family, work, music, art and more.

C. Over the next year you will be hearing more and more about the Reformation. In light of this, Mike is going to reflect on it, looking specifically at Romans 1:17, the passage that started it all. Let me read Romans 1:16 and 17 for you. It comes early in the letter, right after the introduction, and it helps frame everything that follows. It reads:

1. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,[e] just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

2. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’

D. The Apostle Paul was quoting from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. Luther did not understand what the passage meant because he did not understand grace. He thought that God loved him to the extent that he earned it. When Luther finally read this passage in the Greek the lights went on. And he understood the radical, gracious nature of God and that changed everything.

E. In a moment we will watch a short video that shows Luther nailing the 95 theses onto the door of the Castle in Wittenberg. Right now we are going to sing *A Mighty Fortress is our God*. It is probably the best known of Luther's hymns. He wrote a number of them – putting Christian lyrics to the beer drinking songs that were being sung in the pubs at the time. He wrote this particular hymn after emerging from a significant physical and spiritual depression. And it talks about our ability to trust God.

II. Video of Luther nailing 95 theses onto Door of Wittenberg

III. Intro

A. As you have heard, Monday marks the 499th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, a revolution launched by an obscure German professor and monk teaching at a new, second tier university, that ended up launching a massive political, social, cultural and theological revolution that changed the church, the state, the family, work, music, art and more.

B. Luther did not intend to do any such thing. He was frustrated with some problems in the church and so he posted a list of his frustrations on the door of the castle in Wittenberg, Germany because that was the way you posted your blog at that time. It was the community bulletin board.

C. He wrote his theses in Latin because he was calling for a discussion among scholars. But the printing press had just recently been invented. And someone pulled down his list, translated it into German, had it printed and distributed all over Germany and things really took off.

D. In order to understand what happened I need to give you a quick review of Western Civ. And then we'll turn to Romans 1 to focus on the importance of grace.

IV. For simplicity sake I am going to divide Western Civilization into ten eras:¹

A. First – the Birth of the West.

1. This happened about 2,500 years ago when the insights from some Greek philosophers² - thinkers like Socrates and Plato who were prioritizing reason – mixed with the views of the Jews.^{3, 4} What emerged was a culture that was far stronger and more vibrant than anything else.

B. Two: The Roman Empire

1. The Romans came to power not long before Christ was born and, in various ways, dominated the known world for centuries to follow.

2. They built roads, schools and libraries; they set up amazing aqueduct systems that piped in running water and allowed for sewers. They promoted literacy and philosophy and architecture. There was nothing like it.⁵

3. But empires never last. The Romans grew soft and went into debt and eventually outsourced their military to the barbarian tribes in the area – the Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, Huns and the like. This was a bit like the Rolling Stones hiring The Hells Angels to run security. At some point you realize that you're more scared of who you hired than anyone else. In the early fifth century the Barbarians revolted, storming the gates and Rome fell.⁶

4. With the Barbarians in charge everything fell apart. Literacy rates plummeted. The aqueducts and sewage systems stopped working and large-scale social order collapsed.⁷ Chaos replaced culture.⁸ Life became small. To add misery on top of misery, the Bubonic Plague rolled across Europe killing one hundred million people and decimating the population of Europe.

C. Three: The Dark Ages

1. For about 150 years the lights went out. It's no longer politically correct to refer to this era as the Dark Ages, but that is what we used to call it and it was dark. The sources of light were the monasteries out in the country – and so these are where people fled.

2. There was hope and literacy and trade there. If you want to read about it, go to Thomas Cahill's book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*.

D. Four: The Middle Ages.

1. Eventually the church pulled most of Europe out of the quagmire⁹ and things began to improve. That led into the next era, which is called both the Middle Ages and Christendom.

2. My standard joke here is that most people know very little about this time other than what they picked up watching Monty Python.¹⁰

3. What you need to know is that with the collapse of Rome and the Roman Empire, the church stepped into the void.¹¹ And two things happened:

a) It became very powerful

- b) It grew corrupt. More good happened here than we hear about today, but there were definitely problems. This is where we have the Inquisition¹², Crusades, and indulgences.¹³
4. The Middle Ages last almost a thousand years. In the fourteenth century things begin to change.
- E. Five: The Renaissance (Rebirth)
1. This movement started in Italy and then spread throughout Europe and it was marked by a “return to the sources,”¹⁴ which in turn led to:
- the re-discovery of Greek philosophy;
 - the decline in the influence of the papacy.¹⁵
 - the invention of the printing press
 - the launching of the scientific revolution.¹⁶
- F. Six: Then we get to the Reformation
- Which in many ways is the spiritual side of the Renaissance.
 - As I’ve already noted, the match that lit the fire was Luther’s decision to post his list of 95 complaints on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517. But you need to understand why he did this and how it unfolded.
 - Luther was a bit odd but he was very devout. He desperately wanted to be right with God but he knew no peace. And then there was a breakthrough.
 - While preparing lectures for his students, Luther started studying Romans in Greek as opposed to Latin. What he believed Romans 1:17 said was:
 - If you do the things set out by the church – penance, go to confession, deny yourself physical pleasure, give money – then you will become righteous. He was doing all of those things – in fact, he was known to spend up to three hours a day in confession – but he knew he was still a long way from holy. He was not good enough to be embraced by God.
 - When he read Romans 1 in the Greek he discovered that the Greek word that had been translated *justificare* was different than he thought. He came to realize that what Paul was saying was not that we would be made holy but that we would be declared holy. That if we put our trust in Christ, God would apply His righteousness to our account. This changed everything. Luther had a eureka moment and immediately started writing about it.¹⁷
 - He writes about this in his commentary on Romans:
 - 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,” 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.

b) 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. The passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven...He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face.

6. I said there were two reasons Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door. The first was he finally understood what Romans meant. The second reason was because Luther was mad because of the sale of indulgences, which were a sort of “get out of purgatory free” card that you could buy from the church and which were used to help fund the Crusades and build St. Peter’s Basilica.^{18, 19}

7. Once the fight started the big issue became, how is the answer going to be decided? What is the ultimate source of authority? The Bible or the Bible as interpreted by church leaders?

8. So the real split was over whether we trust the Bible (alone) or we filter the Bible through the interpretive grid of the Church, which had come to be a lot of other decisions by councils and church leaders – what we sometimes wrap under the term “tradition.”

9. Almost everyone realized that the church needed to be reformed and a number of people had tried or were trying,²⁰ but Luther is the one who gets the credit for setting things in motion.²¹ And he ends up challenging something much bigger than a few practices – he goes to the question of where authority ultimately lies – with the Bible alone or with the Bible as interpreted by the church authorities. We see this play out in a made for TV moment that I want to show you now. After a few years of correspondence in which Luther was told to stop spreading his views, he was put on trial for his writings. In the scene I am going to show you he was told that he must reverse his positions.²² RUN VIDEO

10. He’s a complicated guy and his story is amazing. In fact, it’s been told a lot – more has been written about Luther than about any other person besides Jesus. It’s a miracle he stays alive long enough to do what he does. But he does, and under his leadership:

- a) The church eventually splits.²³
- b) Europe begins a transition to nation states.
- c) The Bible moves back to center stage for those who follow Luther.

11. There are four eras that follow the Reformation This is arbitrary. We could say five and make one for all of the other reformations – there was a counter-reformation launched within the Roman Catholic Church,²⁴ and other more radical reformations launched by those who didn’t think Luther and those with him went far enough. We also have the Council of Trent, the Thirty Years War²⁵ and the Treaty of Westphalia.²⁶

G. Seven: The Enlightenment.

1. Not long after all of this, Europe – and eventually America – enter into the Enlightenment or Age of Reason, a period that will last for a couple hundred years. It is during this time

- a) The First Great Awakening occurs (1730 – 1740)
- b) The US declares her independence
- c) The 1793 Reign of Terror happens in France.

H. Eight: Modernity.

1. This is followed by a period we'll call The Modern Era – or Modernity – which is marked by the spread of the Enlightenment Worldview. This includes:

2. A growing confidence in human reason and a heady optimism that will race through most of the West.²⁷

3. Progress was no longer just possible it was inevitable.

I. This leads into the 20th Century (Nine), where things did not go as promised.

1. If you read what the thinkers said would happen during the 20th century you got all kinds of nonsense about peace, love and sharing. Science was going to fix everything and everyone was going to get along with everyone.

2. One of the few people who got it right was Nietzsche, the German philosopher who said, the 20th century will be a blood bath.

J. Which leads us into the 21st Century and Postmodernity (number 10).

V. We could spend forever unpacking our history or trying to carefully understand the moment. I want you to see that:

A. The Reformation was a big deal – it was one of the biggest pivot points of all times. So big, in fact, that more has been written about Martin Luther than any other person who ever lived other than Jesus.²⁸ And in the march up to the 500th anniversary, you can expect that even more will be written.

B. The Reformation was a complicated and layered event.²⁹

1. The thing that set it off was nailing the 95 theses on the Door in Germany, but others were working on this before Luther.³⁰

C. One of the things that emerged out of the writings of John Calvin, who was one of the Magisterial Reformers was what we call the Five Solas. (Sola is the Latin word for “only,” or “alone.”³¹

VI. The Five Solas:

A. *Sola scriptura* is the teaching that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God, is the only source for Christian doctrine, and is accessible to all — that is, it is perspicuous and self-interpreting.³²

B. *Sola Fide* - the teaching that justification (interpreted in Protestant theology as, "being declared right by God", rather than "being made righteous by God") is received by faith alone. It is always evidenced by good works but is not dependent upon them.³³

C. *Sola gratia* - by grace alone. *Sola gratia* is the teaching that salvation comes by God's grace or "unmerited favor" only — not as something merited by the sinner. This means that salvation is an unearned gift from God for Jesus' sake.

D. *Solus Christus* ("Christ alone" or *Solo Christo*, Through Christ Alone). *Solus Christus* is the teaching that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other.³⁴

E. *Soli Deo gloria* ("glory to God alone"). Which was basically a statement that there is no value in honoring or praying to the "saints."³⁵

VII. Of these five, I want to focus on number three – grace.

A. When it comes to grace I think there are four categories of people.

1. Those who know they do not get it.
2. Those who think they get it but do not. Which starts with those who might say something like, "grace is what some people say before the eat" and moves on from there.
3. Those who can give a technically correct answer – one that would satisfy a theology professor even if they were not being gracious – but who are not overwhelmed by God's grace.
 - a) This initially came together for me when I heard the difference between grace, mercy and justice and the illustration about getting pulled over for speeding.
 - b) It spread as I got to Trinity and read about one of the very first conflicts in the church – which revolved around a debate between Pelagius and Augustin.
 - c) Pelagius was a highly-educated 5th century British cleric who fled Rome when it fell to the barbarians in 410. He went south to Northern Africa and settled into the area being led by Augustine. And he was bothered by the morally lax lives being led by the people there. And he eventually blamed Augustine's preaching. They went back and forth. Augustine won.
 - (1) It's a bit complicated by the fact that Pelagius led a morally exemplary life and by the fact that it's not entirely clear how he ended up.
 - d) But whatever he believed – and I need to go back and read up on this again – Pelagianism is the view that denies original sin and argues that Jesus was principally our example. This was understood to be a heresy. It clearly goes against Scripture.
 - e) Semi-Pelagianism is toned down some. This view says that man is sick and in need of help of a higher power, but suggests that we contribute to our salvation. It was condemned as heresy at the Council of Orange in 529.

- f) Illustrate using bridges. Man builds all the way, part of the way.
- 4. Finally, those who marvel at grace. It never grows stale.³⁶
- B. My guess is that you are in camps two and three. Which is not surprising because grace is pretty radical. No other religion has anything like grace, and the truth is, most Christians have a hard time holding on to it.
 - 1. Hey, the Medieval Church did.
 - 2. The truth is, we are all Pelagians at heart.
 - 3. I started collecting definitions³⁷
 - a) Grace is “more than we deserve and greater than we can imagine.”³⁸
 - b) Grace is doing good for someone when there is no compelling reason to do so and every reason not to do so.
 - c) Grace is getting what we do not deserve.
 - d) Grace is good will towards those who deserve ill will.
 - e) Grace is God’s redeeming kindness towards those who deserve his wrath.
 - f) Grace is the love of God shown to the unlovely.
 - g) God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.
 - h) Andy Stanley defines grace as, “the solution to just about everything.”
 - 4. But the honest truth is, I still didn’t get it and mostly I simply tried to be good and hide my sin.
 - a) I treated my faith like earning a merit badge in Boy Scouts.
 - b) And I was very proud of my efforts, in the quiet, smug, socially acceptable way that seemed acceptable in the circles I ran in.
 - c) We didn’t drink, smoke or chew or go with girls who do.
 - 5. I was a card carrying Pharisee, I just didn’t know it.

6. A friend of mine – who has since passed away – complained that as hard as she tried she couldn't find the "let go" muscle and massage it out so she could stop striving and simply accept God's love. (This was JP's sister, Catherine Price).

VIII. Men and women, I am here to tell you, in spite of what you might think is true or what feels right, the good news is the radical message that everything that needs to be done for you to be right with God has been done by Christ.

A. Just like a child cannot earn their parents love – it's a given – we do not hear God's love of favor. We simply chose to be in a right relationship with him by accepting his love.

B. Now that radical reorientation does change us. When we understand what God is doing for us and how much he loves us and who he is, we love and serve. We can't do otherwise.

C. The grace of God is not opposed to effort, it's opposed to earning.

D. God's grace is His love shown on people who do not deserve it.

E. If you get that you do not deserve it but want it, you turn to Him.

F. There is a great quote from Mark Batterson:

1. Why do we act as though our sin disqualifies us from the grace of God? That is the only things that qualifies us! Anything else is a self-righteous attempt to earn God's grace. You cannot trust God's grace 99 percent. It's all or nothing. The problem, as I pointed out earlier, is that we want partial credit for our salvation.³⁹

IX. I still struggle with grace.

A. I continue to dumb it down.

1. I slip into something that is 99 percent grace with just a little works.

2. I take some comfort in the understanding that Paul kept talking about it, which leads me to believe you simply have to keep thinking about it and re-clarifying it.

B. I have a hard time accepting it.

1. It is so very easy to slip into legalism and to believe that God will love us more if only we are good.

2. Experiences of grace are amazing and rare. There are a handful of grace events where grace has broken through

a) Years ago in an accountability group where I confessed a sin I was struggling with. I was so frustrated and ashamed. And they were understanding. And I realized – they know the worst and still accept me.

C. The hardest part of my job is persuading people that the Good News is really as good as advertised.

¹ Real historians cringe when a hack like me starts dividing things into neat segments. Reality is far more complicated than I am suggesting.

² The Greeks early religious beliefs centered around fate – there was no rational or moral purpose to be found in the world, just a cycle of life and death with a series of events in between, all driven by fate. Gradually these views gave way to a belief in a pantheon of Olympian gods, which were initially personifications of the various forces of nature (Poseidon of the Sea, Hades of the underworld, Apollo of the sun, Hephaestus of fire, etc) and then later expanded to include patrons of human activity (e.g. Hera of Marriage, Athena of Education, Aphrodite of love). The addition of thinking gods suggested some measure of order to the world, but life was still largely controlled by impersonal fate. Humans were pawns to blind chance and the whims of the gods.

³ Around 600 BC - or roughly 200 years before the events of the Old Testament draw to a close – the Greeks emerge on the world stage with a wonderfully advanced culture. Prior to this date they, like their ancient neighbors, attributed the mysteries of the world to the hands of the gods. But around this time several bold thinkers made the first known efforts to understand the world on the basis of reason alone. Scholars refer to the emergence of the ancient Greek's as a golden era in history because their culture was so far advanced in so many ways. Their celebration of beauty, experiments with democracy and appreciation of sports profoundly shape western culture. This elevation of reason over revelation became the birth of philosophy. Of course there had been wisdom teachers in the ancient world before. But the Greeks were different. Hebrew wisdom literature was based on the belief that “the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are examples of Hebrew wisdom literature. Ps. 111:10, Prov. 9:10 and 15:33 state that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”) While other cultures generally affirmed the wisdom found in tradition. The Greeks were unique in grounding wisdom in reason alone. This approach quickly spread. By 500 BC the thoughts of the first philosophers could be found throughout Greece. By 350 BC the thoughts of Greek philosophers would be found throughout the known world. The Hellenistic Age had arrived.

⁴ People base their views on some combination of reason, tradition, experience (or intuition) and revelation (the belief that God has revealed truth and himself). The Greeks prioritized reason more than those before them. The Jews and Christians affirmed the Bible as one of the key ways God has revealed himself to us).

⁵ My high school social studies teacher said that, other than today, he would rather live during the Pax Romana than any other time.

⁶ Roman history is divided into several periods. The Roman Republic starts in 509 BC and goes up until 44 BC when it transitions into the Roman Empire (where the leaders take away power from the Senate). The Eastern half lasts longer. And there will later be a Holy Roman Empire which starts in 800 when Pope Leo III crowned Charles the Great (Charlemagne) as Emperor and goes until about 1800. It is mostly German, and it was neither Holy, nor Roman nor an Empire. // Some said it crumbled because Christianity was spreading (Rodney Stark claims that Rome was about fifty percent Christian when it fell) throughout the empire and that Christians were bad citizens. Augustine will say no, by the way. He writes *City of God* to argue that Rome had fallen for other reasons and Christians were great citizens.

⁷ This was not entirely the case, as we will note later. There were some areas that remained from free barbarian attack and the Celtic monks in Ireland worked hard to preserve books and other items of importance. Nevertheless, it would some time before anyone of the stature of Augustine, Jerome, or Chrysostom would emerge.

⁸ In the years following the fall of Rome people's lives dramatically changed. Whereas they once had traveled along the Roman roads, enjoyed the fruit of trade and great security, they now lived in small fiefdoms and struggled to survive. Some of the art and much of the architecture survived the fall, which meant that the people were surrounded by evidence of an earlier empire that had been great. Many would be quite aware of how small their life had become.

⁹ See Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*.

¹⁰ Because it is so long it is divided into different phases – though there is not universal agreement on how to break it down. Some use the term Dark Ages to refer to the first 150 years. Many no longer like that term. Others refer to

the Early, Middle and Late Middle Ages. The late Middle Ages cover a four hundred year period of rapid urbanization, human calamity and political intrigue. It begins with the continued Christianization of Europe and ends with the return of Greek philosophy. Among the positive developments that were advanced by the church during this period was the rebirth of higher education. (Greek Academies had provided a model for this one thousand years earlier, but nothing of the sort remained when it was re-launched by the church) and the growth of science.

¹¹ After the fall of Rome and the barbarian's balkanization of Western Europe, the only pan-European institution left to provide a sense of cohesion throughout the continent was the church. In fact, as hard as it may be for those of us who think in terms of nation-states, most people living at this time had no sense of national belonging. Instead, their political identity was tied to the church. Kenneth Clark, author of *Civilization*, goes so far as to say that, "If you had asked the average man of the time to what country he belonged, he would not have understood you. But he would have known what bishopric he belonged to." The power this gave to the clergy should not be underestimated.

¹² The Inquisition: The church forces people to believe with torture, believing that it is better to suffer in this life than to lose your soul.

¹³ It's not a good time. Almost everyone recognizes that the church has become corrupt: 1) for a period of time there are rival popes; 2) Bishop's buy their offices and then sell salvation; 3) *lay people are prevented from reading the Bible*.

¹⁴ Beginning in Italy in the 14th century there is a group of people who start to look back – beyond the Middle Ages – to the teachings of the Greeks: Some of the Crusaders had brought back the writings of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers from the Middle East; this sparks a celebration of Unaided Reason; a rebirth or “renaissance” takes place; man becomes the measure of all things

¹⁵ What happened is that some of the Crusaders came back from the Middle East with Plato and Aristotle and these ideas began to spread.

¹⁶ Other events were: Columbus discovers America; Michelangelo paints Sistine Chapel

¹⁷ What helped Luther was the fact that – because of the Renaissance, he had learned Greek, and the idea that everyone should “return to the sources” led him to look at the Greek text not the Latin translation. (ad fonts). The Latin word being used for justification at that moment in church history was *justificare*, which came from the Roman judicial system. It is made up of the Latin words *justus*, which is justice or righteousness, and the verb, *facere*, which means to make. And so, the Latin fathers understood the doctrine of justification to be the process by which God makes people righteous over time through the sacraments. When Luther looked at the Greek word that was in the New Testament it was *dikaios*, which didn't mean to make righteous, but rather to *regard* as righteous, to *declare* as righteous. And this was the moment of awakening for Luther. He said, “You mean, Paul is not talking about our becoming righteousness like God, but being declared righteous by His grace? That changes everything. He then realized that this was an alien righteousness - *justitia alienum*; a righteousness that belongs properly to somebody else. Luther said, “When I discovered that, I was born again of the Holy Ghost, the doors of paradise swung open, and I walked through.”

¹⁸ In 1516-17 Johann Tetzel – a papal commissioner for indulgences comes into town to raise money to rebuild St Peter's Basilica by selling indulgences. The Roman Catholic leaders were teaching that we were saved by faith plus good works. Faith alone was not enough. And one of the ways you could gain good works was by donating money to the church. Tetzel was also offering sales for your ancestors. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." On October 31, 1517, Luther posted an academic rebuttal of this and some of the other abuses he saw in the church.

¹⁹ Indulgences raised another troubling issue: “...the sale of indulgences undermined respect for the pope, since Christians understandably asked, first, why the pope did not liberate the tormented souls of purgatory for the sake of love, rather than demanding money for it, and, second, why he didn't use his own money to build St. Peter's, rather than that of 'indigent believers.'” (Carl J. Richard, *The Battle for the American Mind* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 5.

²⁰ Among the Pre-reformers were: John Wycliffe (1330-84) who was called “The Morning Star of the Reformation. His followers translated the Bible into the common language so the people could read it; 2) John Hus (1372-1415) who was eventually martyred. It’s also worth noting that Pope Gregory VIII labored to reform both the financial and sexual misconduct of the priests. He is the one who makes celibacy a requirement for priests.

²¹ Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) – a man about whom it is said that more has been written than any other person besides Christ. He was born into a middle class family in the area of Germany – which was then part of the Holy Roman Empire. His father was ambitious for himself and his family and sent Martin away to school with a desire that he become a lawyer. But on July 2, 1505, while walking through a field, a lightning storm hit and Luther promised God that if he would spare his life he would serve him. He followed through – much to his dad’s horror. Luther entered an Augustinian friary in Germany to become a monk & distinguished himself as one of the most pious priests of all times. He spent hours in confession, prayer and fasting. He drove others crazy with his religious zeal. In fact he would later remark, "If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would indeed have been among them." (Kittelson, James. *Luther The Reformer*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing House, 1986). His superior decided that Luther needed more work to distract him from his introspection and ordered him to pursue an academic career. In 1507, he was ordained to the priesthood. In 1508 began teaching theology at the University in Wittenberg – a town of about 2,500 people. This is where he will remain for the rest of his life. It is while teaching the Bible that Luther really starts to read it – doing so in the Greek not the Latin Vulgate. To his shock he realizes that there are some real differences between what the church is teaching and what the Bible teaches. In particular on the issue of justification. He begins to teach on this and starts to gain a following.

²² The response of Rome was slow. It took three years really. They kept sending people out to talk to Luther and generally dismissed him as a drunk German who would sober up over time. But during this time Luther started writing more and more books and letters and his fame began to spread. And his rhetoric got sharper and sharper. In a debate with Eck Luther calls the Pope the Anti-Christ. Which was crossing a line. He was not the first to do so. Wycliffe had done so back in the 14th century. And the Popes had called each other that. There was a period when there were more than one Pope – for a time there were three. And they had said some pretty nasty things about each other. But this was crossing a line. In 1520 the Pope finally responded by sending a Papal Bull warning Luther that he needed to recant of 41 things he had written – including the 95 Theses – or risk being excommunicated. Luther responded by burning the Papal Bull. He was excommunicated and fell under a ban of the Empire. Which means that from that point on anyone can kill him at any time without any repercussions. It is amazing that he manages to stay alive. He didn’t expect to. In 1521 he is ordered to appear at the Diet of Worms and promised safe passage there and back. This promise was not worth that much. It had been offered to Jan Hus 100 years earlier and when he got there he was not only not allowed to speak in his own defense but immediately upon being declared a heretic he was stripped of his rights and burned at the stake. But Luther went. It was here that he makes his spirited defense before so many people, including the Holy Roman Emperor

²³ The Reformation is the second major split within the church. The first arose around the 11th century when Leo the Great,²³ the bishop of Rome, claimed to be the official heir of the Apostle Peter and the rightful ruler of the church. Leo argued that: 1) the keys to the kingdom had been entrusted to Peter and through a series of apostolic successions down through the bishops of Rome had come to rest with him; 2) he was ordained to speak not only for Peter but also for God. Some bishops recognized Leo’s authority, and that of all future Bishops of Rome. Others did not. The Bishop of Constantinople, who held a position of similar status in the East, was among those who did not agree with Leo’s claim.

²⁴ The Counter Reformation or Catholic Reformation can be seen starting with the Council of Trent, which was called in 1545, and ending with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In response to Luther and the dramatic spread of his ideas there was a gathering in Northern Italy. It met in three phases over 18 years. In the first gathering – 1545 to 1547 – which was the most important, they discussed the relationship between the authority of Scripture and Tradition and rejected the doctrine of sola Scriptura (not solo Scripture). They said that the Bible is the final authority along with Tradition, which is ultimately determined by the Pope. They also dealt with justification – which they considered the most important view. Affirmed salvation by grace, but not by grace alone. They said that no one should flatter themselves by grace alone. And they reaffirmed the seven sacraments. In the second gathering 1551 – 1552 they. Reaffirmed transubstantiation and the idea that Christ’s sacrifice is repeated every time Mass is

said. Also dealt with some practical issues. (They said that bishops had to live in their districts and they also said that they could not be married).

²⁵ The Thirty Years War 1618 – 1648. A destabilization that leads to a series of very bloody wars. Countries adopt the religious views of their leader. Which means that you not only have fights between countries you have battled within them. (This is when Queen Mary – Bloody Mary). This is put forth as the last war about faith in the West. Which is essentially true in part b/c faith will not be important enough to fight over after that.

²⁶ The Peace Treaty of Westphalia. In 1648 everyone was tired of fighting and the various factions came together and agreed that: Each prince would have the right to determine the religion of his own state - the options being Catholicism, Lutheranism, and now Calvinism; Christians living in principalities where their denomination was not the established church were guaranteed the right to practice their faith in public during allotted hours and in private at their will. This was very significant.

²⁷ One of the ways modern man sought to free himself of some of his earlier limitations was to reposition law. Prior to 1875 the legal system of the United States had a theistic foundation. Human laws were understood to be just if they were grounded in a transcendent law. Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes led the charge to change this by arguing that the law is only grounded in the social unit. In other words, people make up the law as they go by practicing law in the context of society. Or, whatever the Supreme Court says is law is law. They are free to write the law as they see fit. There is no higher law they should seek to model.

²⁸ Wikipedia notes that Luther changed Western Civilization: 1) He not only sets in motion a new church; 2) He fundamentally changed the family (he emptied the convents and monasteries); 3) he advocates the priesthood of all believers; 4) *he* changes music

²⁹ Most Protestants would be surprised to know that: He did not set out to break away from the church. That was unthinkable to him for years. He did not believe that the Catholic Church was wrong on all fronts. He certainly does not dismiss everything that happened b/w the early church and Reformation – as some do. Luther contends that trouble begins in 12th century. A lot of current scholarship – perhaps the consensus at this point – contends that Luther and Calvin were not setting in motion some movement towards the Enlightenment or intent on otherwise dividing the church, they were launching an appropriately catholic reaction against Roman Catholic innovation. Calvin's argument against Sadoletto is that it is not the Reformers who have innovated away from the church of the apostles and early Church Fathers, it is the Pope and Roman Church that has done all of the innovation. See Jason Byassee's letter to the editor, Books and Culture, July / August 2008, p. 11.

³⁰ It is often misunderstood. Even the word Protestant is not well understood. Most have no idea what it means. Some think it means "Protest" – as a reaction against RC teaching. Patristic Scholar D.H. Williams argues that it was mostly a positive affirmation of positive principles. (D.H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 173-4.

³¹ I would argue that Initially the power of the church rested with the Apostles and, by extension, with their writings. After their death their influence was carried forth with the Word of God. However, over time the authority came to lie with those who interpreted it. This was especially true as the ranks of the illiterate grew during the Dark Ages. Over the course of the next several hundred years we watch as the power of church leaders grew to eclipse that of the Bible itself. Also, we need to understand that at some point along this way that the word tradition takes on a new meaning. As noted in the first study, tradition spelled with a small "t" refers to the customs and beliefs that are handed down from one generation to the next. Tradition spelled with a capital "T" refers to the teachings of the church that have great authority. The Roman Catholic Church uses the word Magisterium to refer to the collective teaching of the church – i.e. Tradition with a capital "T."

³² This is opposed to the teaching of the RC church that: 1) only clergy can interpret it; 2) that it *must* be accompanied by Tradition

³³ "Faith yields justification and good works" and as contrasted with the Roman Catholic formula "Faith and good works yield justification." The Sola fide doctrine is sometimes called the material cause of the Reformation because

it was the central doctrinal issue for Martin Luther and the other reformers. Luther called it the "doctrine by which the church stands or falls"

³⁴ This principle rejects "sacerdotalism," which is the belief that there are no sacraments in the church without the services of priests ordained by apostolic succession under the authority of the pope.

³⁵ The reformers believed that human beings—even saints canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, the popes, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy—are not worthy of the glory that was accorded them. That is that one should not exalt such humans for their good works, but rather praise and give glory to God who is the author and perfecter of these people and their good works.

³⁶ Those who actually get it and marvel about it all the time. It keeps popping up and blowing them away. In his *ABCs of Theology*, Frederick Buechner writes: After centuries of handling and mishandling, most religious words have become so shopworn nobody's much interested any more. Not so with grace, for some reason. Mysteriously, even derivatives like gracious and graceful still have some of the bloom left. Buechner's definition goes on as follows: Grace is something you can never get but only be given. There's no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your own birth. A good sleep is grace and so are good dreams. Most tears are grace. The smell of rain is grace. Somebody loving you is grace. Loving somebody is grace. Have you ever tried to love somebody? A crucial eccentricity of the Christian faith is the assertion that people are saved by grace. There's nothing you have to do. There's nothing you have to do. There's nothing you have to do. The grace of God means something like: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you. There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too.

³⁷ I also came to realize that one of the purposes of the Law was to help people see that they fall short. In Reformed theology we recognize three purposes of the law: 1) The law helps keep society relatively civil – it restrains sin, especially when backed up by civil force; 2) It shows us what would please God. It reflects the way things work best; 3) And the law shows us how far short we fall. As Augustine wrote, "the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace."

³⁸ This is the title of a Max Lucado book.

³⁹ Mark Batterson, *All In*, Zondervan, 2013, p. 65.