(Christian History) 13. the Reformation in Germany

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores Martin Luther's pivotal role in the Reformation, focusing on his opposition to the sale of indulgences and the theological implications of his 95 Theses.

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23-24, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 6:10, James 2:15-16, 1 Peter 5:2-3

Topics: "Church History", "Reformation Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the early life of Martin Luther and his role as a university lecturer and parish priest in Wittenberg, Germany. However, it was Luther's heart as a pastor and Bible teacher that sparked the controversy that led to the Reformation. The controversy centered around the sale of indulgences, which were believed to absolve the spiritual penalty of sin but not the temporal penalty. The speaker explains the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory and how it was seen as a way to reconcile the discrepancy between those who followed the sacraments but lived ungodly lives.

Transcript

In our last lecture, we took a look at the early life of Martin Luther and basically bringing him up to the point where he was a university lecturer and a parish priest in the city of Wittenberg, Germany. Well, as we said before then, in the year 1514, Luther became a local church preacher and a pastor in Wittenberg. Don't forget that.

He wasn't only a university teacher, but he was also a pastor. He combined both roles in his daily responsibilities. But it was more his heart as a pastor and as a Bible teacher than it was as a university professor that started the controversy which started the Reformation, and that was the whole controversy over the sale of indulgences.

And we sort of have to back up and give a little bit of background for this. In Roman Catholic thinking, there are two penalties for every sin. There's the spiritual penalty and there's the temporal penalty.

The priest can absolve you or forgive you the spiritual penalty, but you have to deal with the temporal penalty yourself. I mean, we sort of understand this, right? Let's say a man or a woman is an alcoholic, and you can say, well, there's a spiritual penalty for that addiction, for that sin that they suffer under. Yes,

it's true, there's a spiritual penalty for that.

But there's also a earthly or a penalty that's held within time, right? They ruin their health, they ruin their family. So this idea between being a spiritual penalty and a temporal penalty, it's not hard to figure out how they would make that distinction. The simple idea is that every sin has its inescapable consequences.

Well, we might limit those inescapable consequences to what happens on this earth, right? In Roman Catholic theology, the inescapable consequences of sin go much beyond that. And basically, what you have to do is--let me phrase that, what you have to do is not the right way to begin that sentence. Instead, let me say that part of the inescapable consequences of sin, part of the temporal consequences of sin, have to do with purgatory.

Again, we need to sort of understand the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. You see, Roman Catholics had a very neat and clean system of salvation, right? If you kept the sacraments, if you checked off the box of the sacramental system, then you knew that you were saved. However, as I discussed in a previous lecture, there was the great difficulty of seeing people who had checked off all the boxes but lived terrible lives.

And how do you reconcile the two? How can you say, this person has done everything that the church says they must do in order to be saved, but they sure don't live anything that looks like a godly life? How do you reconcile that within your head? They reconciled it by basically creating the doctrine of purgatory, which says that person, and indeed most all people, can't go straight to heaven when they die. Instead, they go to a sort of a middle place called purgatory, where they are purged from their earthly sins. That's the whole foundation behind the idea of purgatory.

It's purging. You're cleansed. And basically what happens in purgatory is you suffer under, in Roman Catholic theology, literally the fires of affliction.

Purgatory is a hot place where people suffer, and that suffering pays the temporal penalty of their sin. And then once that is paid off in purgatory, you go to heaven. Now, if a person is good on this earth and follows the sacraments, they have a little bit of purgatory, right? If a person's bad, they have a lot of purgatory.

But understand this. In Roman Catholic theology, purgatory is only for the saved, right? The damned go straight to hell. And purgatory has the idea of the place where you're cleaned up before you go to heaven, and you're cleaned up depending on how dirty you are, and therefore it's for everybody.

Now, there's a few people whom the Roman Catholic Church considers saints who don't go to purgatory at all, right? They're good enough to where they go straight to heaven. But that's very, very few people. Now, basically what you did when you bought an indulgence was you were doing penance.

If anybody was raised in a Roman Catholic environment, you know what doing penance is, right? You go into the confessional, you confess your sins to the priest, and the priest will say, okay, here's your penance. I want you to say, five Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. And that would be a typical example of a penance, at least when I was a young boy in the Roman Catholic Church, that's what they might tell you.

Who knows, today they might do other things, they might assign you to do good works. And so you'd go out after the confessional, and you'd go kneel near the altar, you'd go to the pew, and you'd say the required number of Our Fathers and the required number of Hail Marys, and that was the penalty that you paid for your sin. Basically, indulgence was buying penance.

It was a way to demonstrate your repentance through the giving of money instead of through doing some good work. Now, it wasn't until the 11th century that indulgences were given to relax the temporal penalty of sin on the condition that the money be given for the building of a church or a monastery. Then the practice of indulgences became more and more widespread with the advent of the Crusades, beginning with the First Crusade in 1095.

Pope Urban II then promised the remission of all penance to those who fought in the Crusades to liberate the Holy Land, and later on this was extended to those who simply supported the Crusades with money, right? I mean, if a soldier gets time off purgatory for fighting in the In the year 1343, the sale of indulgences was endorsed by an official church decree, and that official church decree read this, Now this treasure is not hidden in a napkin or buried in a field, but he entrusted it to be healthfully dispensed through blessed Peter, bearer of heaven's keys, and his successors as vicars on earth, to the faithful for fitting and reasonable causes, now for total, now for partial remission of the temporal punishment of sins. And to this heap of the treasure of the merits of the blessed mother of God and of all the elect, from the first just man to the last, are known to have supplied their increment. Now again, this sort of brings in another aspect of it.

The idea is that Mary and all the saints from the beginning of time have made their deposits in what I described in a previous lecture as the bank of grace, right? They've deposited all their merits in the bank of grace, so there's all this treasury of good works and merit and grace upon which the church can draw. And the Pope, because in Roman Catholic thinking he has the power to bind anything on earth and bind anything in heaven or loose on earth and loose in heaven, the idea is that the Pope has the right to take from that treasury of merit and give it to whoever he wants to. Therefore, if the Pope wants to, he can erase all your time in purgatory, or some of your time in purgatory, or some of your aunt's time in purgatory.

And the Pope says, if you do a good work, I will take some of your time off in purgatory or some of your aunt's time off purgatory or whatever. Now, you get the idea here. The idea is that the Pope is in charge of this treasury of merit, and he can dispense it as he wills.

Well, this developed in not very long a time to the place where people would come and make a financial contribution, and there would be a guy who would write them out a letter of indulgence and say, you know, we've received your contribution, you get this much merit from the Pope, and it takes time off for you in purgatory or for your relative, whoever you want to do it on behalf of. And this was quite a trade. And you can imagine that this made the church a lot of money.

And when they especially needed money, they would push the sale of indulgences, that they would sort of have the indulgence super sale or blowout or whatever it is, where they would go out and try to sell a lot of indulgences. Now, Pope Julius II in 1508 and 1513, they needed money to finance their wars in Italy. So they did what popes had done before them.

They turned to indulgences as a way of raising money. Now, Albrecht of Brandenburg, a German prince, purchased various parishes and bishoprics in Germany in the early years of the 16th century. In the year 1513, he made an agreement with Pope Leo X to sell indulgences in his land.

But by a secret arrangement, half the money went to pay off the debt that he had occurred in buying all those clerical offices, and the other half went to the Pope for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. So they were going to push the sale of indulgences in the German lands. Part of the money would

go to the prince, part of the money would go to the Pope for the rebuilding of St. Peter's, so forth and so on.

And because they really wanted to make a lot of money and sell a lot of indulgences, Albert chose a man named John, sometimes called Johann, we might say in a modern way, John, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, to sell the indulgences. Again, you have to just consider that they did this in a very salesman-like way. They would go from place to place and set up their displays and preach their sermons and make their slogans.

Matter of fact, Tetzel had a slogan, So wie das Geld im Kasten klingt, die Seele aus dem Feuer springt. When the money in the basket rings, the soul from purgatory springs. That's the idea.

And when the indulgent salesman would come to town, they would give it with all, with taking, basically they would come to town, they would come to the parish priest, right, the guy who's the basic pastor, the priest over an individual church, and they'd say, hi, pastor, we'd like to take over your service this Sunday, you know, can we can we have your service because we want to offer your people something good. And so, you know, most of the time, or I guess a lot of times, the pastors would agree, the priests would agree, and they would do this, and they would take over, they would preach fiery sermons. Tetzel used to say things like, listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends begging you and saying, pity us, pity us, we are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance.

Do you not wish so? Do you see how he would do this? Can't you hear your dear Aunt Eldna, you know, screaming to you from purgatory, oh, if you just weren't such a tightwad, and you'd give the money for the indulgence, I could be freed from this place. You see, when the indulgent salesman come to town, they'd set up inside the local church, and once they were there, regular preaching was suspended and forbidden. Actual drafts of indulgent sermons from this time exist, and that was the whole idea here.

They would say, do you not hear the voices of your dead parents and of other people screaming and saying, have pity on me, have pity on me, for the hand of God has touched me. We are suffering severe punishments and pains in purgatory from which you could rescue us if only you would. And then they would say, open your ears, because the father is calling to the son, and the mother is calling to the daughter.

And you can imagine, in these medieval days, when a large part of the population was rather superstitious in their outlook, what an effect this would have. Now, how much would an indulgence cost? Well, it would depend on how much money you had. Kings and queens would be charged a high price, high counts and prelates a lesser price, low counts and prelates still lower, merchants and townspeople a step below, artisans one more step, and then the indigent were told, well, you know, if you had no money whatsoever, they would just say, well, fast and pray, and we'll give you an indulgence.

But this is what you have to understand. Even though many people were attracted to the sale of indulgences through all this guilt, through all this superstition, at the same time, people didn't really like it. And there are many cases of the sellers of indulgences being strung up, being beaten, being driven out of town, because even though they were popular among many people, there were other people who despised the sale of indulgences and who felt that it was a real crime to have such a religious marketplace and spiritual things going around.

Well, anyway, this man, Johann Tetzel, worked the territory right next to where Luther was a professor and a parish priest. Now, Luther objected to the work of Tetzel because he thought people were getting ripped off. And so Luther absolutely forbade his territory to receive the sellers of indulgences.

Tetzel would have loved to come into Luther's territory. I mean, they'd go everywhere he could. He'd love to take over Luther's Sunday morning service and say, you know, let's use it for selling of indulgences.

Luther said, no way. You're not coming into my territory. And he told all his people, don't you mess around with these guys who are selling indulgences.

Well, but when you say that, what do people do, right? A lot of his people just went over into the next county or the next parish area, and they started dealing with this. And when Luther heard about that, he got mad. And so he did the customary thing for a university professor to do.

He invited a scholarly debate on the subject of indulgences. And October 31st, 1517, Luther wrote 95 statements in Latin calling into question the theology and practice of the selling of indulgences. And he sent that list of 95 theses or statements for debate to the bishop, to the archbishop of Mainz, and to other religious and intellectual leaders.

Now, it is also said that he posted these 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. But I have to tell you, there's actually some historical question as to if Luther ever actually nailed the 95 theses to the church door there in Wittenberg. Luther himself never mentioned himself doing it.

You can look in all the writings of Luther, and he never mentions doing this. Now, there's only one source that mentions Luther doing this, and that's Philip Melanchthon, Luther's successor. And we regard Philip Melanchthon to be a reliable source.

But you know, when you're doing history, you like to have two sources or three sources to confirm something. And so though the source is fairly reliable, the fact that it's only one source make many people wonder whether or not this was historic or whether it happened. But we do know this for sure.

Luther did write the 95 theses, and he mailed them, he put them in the mailbox, so to speak, to these different religious leaders on this day. And he may very well have posted them on the church door in Wittenberg. You just have to face it, though, it's a lot more dramatic to see Martin Luther at the church door nailing a piece of paper to the church door than it is to see him putting a letter into a mailbox.

And so no wonder we sort of prize this idea. If you go and take a tour of Wittenberg today, you can see some beautiful metal doors--I can't tell you exactly what the metal is, I don't know if it's copper or bronze or steel or whatever--that have the 95 theses written into it. And it's just sort of a memorial thing.

The very same doors upon which Luther nailed--well, not the very same ones, the very same place of the doors. Of course, Luther couldn't nail anything into metal doors, but there were wooden doors there on Luther's day, and that's where he nailed it there. Yes.

It is definitely true that church doors were used as sort of bulletin boards, and so it was not a strange idea or an unusual idea to think that Luther could have done this. Now, where was--oh, it made sense for Luther to do this on October 31st, 1517. Because you know what comes after October 31st? November 1st.

And November 1st is All Saints' Day. Now, what's interesting is as much as Luther protested many of the superstitions of the Roman Catholic Church, the man who was the prince or the leader, you know, the political leader over the region where Luther was, was a man named Frederick the Wise. Frederick III the Wise, but I'll just say Frederick the Wise.

Frederick the Wise had one of the most remarkable collections of relics in all of Germany. He had collected hundreds or thousands of relics, and you know what kind of relics they were. You know, a piece of the burning bush, soot from the fiery furnace where Daniel and his--or not Daniel, the three Jewish young men were--milk from Mary, breast milk from Mary, actually.

A piece of Jesus' crib. You know, these kind of things were in Frederick the Wise's relic collection. And what they would do on All Saints' Day is they would set up tables full of relics to be adored on November 1st.

Frederick the Wise had in his castle 19,000 pieces of relics, worth more, because you got indulgences for collecting these relics as well. These relics were worth more than 1,900,000 days of indulgences. Well, anyway, so it's interesting that Luther knew that a lot of people would be at the church on November 1st.

It would have made sense for him to post it there on, as we said before, what was sort of the community bulletin board on October 31st. Well, in any regard, whether or not Luther actually posted them on the church door, whether he just dropped them in the mail, those 95 theses took Germany and Europe by storm. Now look, it's very important to say Martin Luther was not the only one to question the practice of indulgences.

Many people throughout Europe had complained and were complaining about them. And this explains in part why the 95 theses spread so rapidly and found such an enthusiastic support. Luther was the first one to really think through a scriptural response to the sale of indulgences, or at least the first one to do it so thoroughly.

Now, we also must admit that Luther expected that the Pope would agree with him when he saw what was happening with the sale of indulgences. Luther's attitude was almost this. Listen, this is a disgrace.

This is terrible. Shouldn't the Pope know about this? Because if he knew about this, he would not be happy at all. Luther greatly overestimated the spirituality of the Pope, because the bottom line on indulgences was the power of the Pope to grant forgiveness.

And in these 95 theses, Luther insisted that all the Pope could do was declare that a person was forgiven by God. He could not grant forgiveness against sins that were, except for sins that had been committed against him personally. Now, if you take a look at some of Luther's 95 theses, you sort of get a feeling for what the document was like.

Number 26, he says, the Pope does well in giving remission to souls, not by the power of the keys, he has no such power, but through intercession. Do you realize what a radical statement that is? For Luther to take this picture that has been so dominant throughout all of medieval Christianity, of the Pope holding the keys of Peter, essentially the keys of the kingdom, and for Luther to say, the Pope doesn't have that power. What he does have, he has the power of intercession.

The Pope is a godly man who can pray, and so he can pray for souls in purgatory. Number 27, those who assert that a soul straightaway flies out of purgatory as a coin tinkles in the collection box are preaching an

invention of man, right? He's specifically speaking against the slogan of Johann Tetzel. Number 28, it is sure that when a coin tinkles, greed and avarice are increased, but the intercession of the church is in the will of God.

You see, Luther wanted to get away from the idea. Now, Luther believed in purgatory, at least at this time. He believed it was good to help people who were suffering in purgatory, but he said, we do that through our prayers.

We don't do it through giving money. Number 36, every Christian who is truly contrite has plenary remission, both of the penance and of guilt as is due, even without a letter of pardon from the Pope. In other words, you don't need a letter of pardon for a financial contribution to forgive you fully of your sins, both in the temporal and in the spiritual aspect.

Number 45, Christians are taught that a man who sees a brother in need and passes him by to give money for the purchase of a pardon wins for himself not the indulgences of a Pope, but the indignation of God. In other words, Luther here is picturing a man, you know, he's on his way to buy his indulgence, and there is a brother who's poor and has need of bread. And he says, wouldn't it be better for the man to give the money to that poor brother who needs bread than it would be for him to give it for the purchase of this bogus indulgence.

Number 50, Christians must be taught that if the Pope knew the exactions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather have St. Peter's Basilica reduced to ashes than built with the skin, flesh, and bone of his sheep. You see what I mean here? Luther's attitude was, man, if the Pope only knew what was going on here, he would be really mad. Number 54, a wrong is done to the Word of God when in the same sermon an equal or longer time is devoted to indulgences than to God's Word.

Number 79, it is blasphemy to say that the cross adorned with papal arms is as effectual as the cross of Christ. Of course, this was a claim, right? You know, here's a cross, and there's a cross, you know, encrusted with the insignia of the Pope, and it was taught and believed that that cross could save you just as much as the cross of Jesus Christ. Number 82, they, that is the laity, ask, why does not the Pope empty purgatory on account of most holy charity and the great need of souls? The most righteous of causes, seeing that he redeems an infinite number of souls on account of sordid money given for the erection of a basilica, which is a most trivial cause.

This one really gets to the point. Luther's saying, listen, if the Pope actually has the power to empty out purgatory and relieve people of their suffering through his intercession or through his, you know, keys of the kingdom, whatever you want to call it, then why doesn't the Pope do it just out of the love in his heart? Why does the Pope stand back and say, you know, I'll free that soul from purgatory if you give me money, sordid money, as Luther calls it? Of course, you can't escape Luther's logic here, right? You're beginning to see why these 95 theses, why this whole issue of indulgences, which let's admit it, in the whole scheme of Roman Catholic theology and objectionable Roman Catholic theology and problems with the Roman Catholic Church, the problem of indulgences is fairly small, right? But isn't it true that sometimes a small thing ignites into a much larger movement? Okay, last couple ones, number 86. The Pope's riches at this day far exceed the wealth of the richest millionaires.

Therefore, can he not build one single basilica of St. Peter out of his own money rather than out of the money of the faithful poor? You know, here Luther's getting testy, isn't he, right? And then finally, number 93. And so farewell to all those prophets who say to Christ's people, the cross, the cross, and there is no

cross. By the way, Johann Tetzel died in 1519, just a couple years after this, and he died a disgraced and a broken man.

Well, what was the Roman Catholic response to the 95 theses of Luther? Well, first, the archbishop, right? You could say that this was sort of Luther's boss, ultimately. The archbishop of Mainz was alarmed and annoyed. He forwarded the documents to Rome in December of 1517 with the request that they severely rebuke Luther.

At the same time, he reprimanded indulgence sellers for their extravagance. You can just see it, you know, so to speak, he gets on the phone, right? And first he gets on the phone to Rome, and he says, you can't believe what this guy Luther's saying. We've got to do something about him.

But then he gets on the phone to guys like Johann Tetzel, and he says, Tetzel, you're ruining everything. You're too extravagant. You got to tone it down some because people are catching on to your act, so to speak.

You see, at the time, many people looked at this whole dispute of the 95 Theses, and they thought that it was just another squabble between monks. Now, I told you that Luther was a monk of what order? The Augustinian order. I said it very quickly, so maybe you didn't catch it.

I said Johann Tetzel was a monk of another order, the Dominican order. Well, listen, just as much as there's sometimes unfortunate rivalries between denominations today, there were definite rivalries among monastic orders in that day. And a lot of people said, oh, look, look, it's just another example of the Augustinian monks fighting some battle, you know, poking at the Dominican monks in some way.

And so they just thought, well, that's what it was. But yet, it sure seemed that it would go deeper than that. And by the way, counter-theses were developed by a Roman Catholic guy named Conrad Wimpina that Tetzel had defended before a Dominican audience in Frankfurt.

And so they started mailing out these counter-theses. When the counter-theses came to Wittenberg in 1518, the students at Wittenberg University took them and publicly burned them. At Rome, the Pope merely instructed one of his clerics to deal with this monk through the usual channels, in this case through his head in the monastic order, that would be staupits.

Luther himself prepared a very long Latin manuscript with explanations of the 95 theses, and that was eventually published in 1518. And then it shows that Luther really believed his protest of the 95 theses. And you would say that when Luther in 1518 published this Latin document explaining and going into greater depth of his objections of the 95 theses, this was really a marking point.

Because Luther at that time could have stepped back, right? He could have said, whoa, whoa, hey, I didn't mean it the way it was taken. Well, I'm sorry about that. You know, let's take a step back here.

But he didn't do that. No, instead what Luther did was he argued very strongly, no, I meant what I said in those 95 theses, and in fact, I meant even more. And so Luther began then a series of debates with different people.

He began a debate with Johann Tetzel, and then the renowned scholar Johann Eck, who formally charged Luther with heresy. Eck came to Wittenberg while Luther had just left to attend to business regarding his Augustinian order. He had to go to Heidelberg.

In his absence, Eck debated with Andreas Karlstadt, who was a very energetic associate of Luther's. Now I need to introduce you to this man, Andreas Karlstadt. Karlstadt was a very strong friend and defender of Luther's views.

And so because Luther was out of town when Eck came to Wittenberg, Karlstadt debated him. Karlstadt concerned or tried to defend the Wittenberg program, and he came forth not with 95 theses, he came forth with 379 theses, adding another 26 right before the thing could be published. In some of these, Eck was criticized.

So the Dominicans continued to press for Luther to be imprisoned or at least severely rebuked, and for the heresy proceedings to continue against him in Rome. And again, Luther didn't improve matters for himself. He published a very bold sermon on the power of excommunication, who basically said, I don't accept this unquestioned right of the Pope to excommunicate people.

Now, the cardinal over this part of Germany, right, you have a whole layer of bureaucratic infrastructure and organization in the Roman Catholic Church, right? So now we're up to the cardinal. And the cardinal of this part of Germany was named Cardinal Cajetan. He was given a command from the office of the Pope to bring Luther to Rome for a heresy trial.

But here's the issue. The political environment favored Martin Luther. You see, we ask ourselves a question, why was it different for Luther? Why was it different in his particular political environment? Well, let me see if I can explain it.

Frederick the Wise was one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Empire. He had a critical role in the selection of the emperor, which was due soon. The Pope could not afford to antagonize Frederick the Wise.

Therefore, the Pope could not pursue Luther as aggressively as he wanted to, because he was protected by Frederick the Wise. You see, to understand this whole situation, you have to understand something about the whole political environment. When Luther was called before Cardinal Cajetan and forced to defend his beliefs, and in all this political struggle, he could speak boldly.

One of the reasons why was not because he was just a brave man, and not just because he was a man with very clear theological thinking, but also because Luther knew that he had political backing behind him. And anyway, Luther was bidden to a personal interview with Cajetan at Augsburg, and he arrived there on October 7th, 1518, with again the promise of safe conduct. The discussion moved from indulgences to the relation between faith and sacramental grace.

It became a much more involved debate about theology and different aspects of the Roman Catholic Church. The bottom line was they told Luther, you have to unconditionally repent of your views. Well, while Luther waited very uneasily, these people thought that he would be taken away in chains.

And eventually, he was fled from the city. He was sort of escaped out of the city, where he had this audience with Cardinal Cajetan, and he was able to get back to Wittenberg, where he would be safer. This set up a later debate that Luke had with Johann Eck in the city of Leipzig.

Now, Eck was a very skillful debater, and he forced Luther into a corner of associating himself with John Hus. You have to admit, that was a very dangerous thing with Luther. If Eck could maneuver in the debate, Luther into a corner where Luther stood with Hus, Hus was a condemned heretic of the church.

And then he could just say, well, look, you're standing with the condemned heretic of the church. What does that make you? Eck eventually went back to Rome to tell the Pope what had happened in the debate. And when he went to Rome, he went basically as somebody who had beaten Martin Luther in this debate.

And so therefore, the Pope issued this papal bull that appeared on June 15th, 1520, and it was called Excurgio Domini. Again, this is up on the PowerPoint here. This is sort of a promotional thing for this disputation with John Eck in 1519.

But the Pope issued this decree, Bulla Contra Martin Luther. This was the front of it, with the whole papal insignia, where he basically said, Lord, cast out. And they made specific arguments against 41 articles of Luther's teaching.

And this was followed by a formal burning of Luther's writings in Rome. This was it. Luther was declared to be an official heretic.

He was now under the same category and under the same potential danger as John Hus was a hundred years earlier. Luther responded here with his own literature. In this, you take a look at Luther, and he's depicted as being this very brave, bold, but very much dressed in his monk's habit, right? Luther considered himself, it wasn't until several years after this that Luther stopped dressing like a monk.

He considered himself a loyal monk to the Augustinian order. And here, from the Babylonian captivity, you know, this is kind of his idea. I'm in my Babylonian captivity, I'm exiled from the true church.

But Luther insisted, even though there were very many attacks made against him. Things were published with depictions of him as being a devil with horns, as being a man who had many different heads, and so had many different opinions, and was therefore unreliable and couldn't be trusted. It was a great propaganda war going back and forth.

I mean, both sides used the modern industry of print to as much advantage as they could. So even though Luther was mocked with broadsheets and pamphlets, Eck and the other leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were shocked to see just how popular Luther had become among the German people. Luther preached more and more in the common language, and he wrote more and more in the common language, and he genuinely touched the people.

On Luther's part, he issued a series of very defiant tracks against the Pope, where he basically opposed the Pope and opposed all the power of the Babylonian Church. Well, I mean, we could go through the different doctrinal points that he made, but just basically, he just came out very strong with a series of tracts and pamphlets against the Roman Catholic Church. And on December 10th, 1520, the students there in Wittenberg lit a bonfire before the Elster Gate there in the city of Wittenberg, and they fed the work of these papal writers against Luther, and they threw in the papal bull.

And this is what Luther said when they threw in the papal bull and burning these things in the city of Wittenberg. He said, listen, because you have corrupted God's truth, may God destroy you in this fire. That's what he said to the Pope.

Now listen, you're getting a little bit of the feel for Martin Luther and his personality. Luther was the right man at the right time. He was the kind of man that if you backed him into a corner, he became even more dangerous, because he was absolutely stubborn, sometimes sinfully stubborn, but he was just so filled

with determination and courage that he said, I'm going to see this through to the end.

And so when the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church kept pushing against Luther, they were pushing against the wrong guy in this sense, because he just pushed back even harder and harder. And in this day, the way that he would denounce the Pope and sort of send the Pope to hell, it was sort of characteristic of the way that they would speak back then, but it also was characteristic of Luther and the very bold and the very plain way that he would speak. Let me put it to you this way.

Martin Luther could not get along in the church today. He just couldn't. People would think that he was too rude, too crude, and he would be too rude and crude for our own day, but in his own day, he was pushing the envelope but not going beyond it.

I mean, Luther used to say things like this, you know, if I fart in Wittenberg, the Pope smells it in Rome. I mean, that's the way he would talk. He was just sort of, you know, he wasn't that way in his sermons, right? I mean, when he preached the Word of God, he would speak in a dignified, proper manner, but fortunately, we have preserved for us what's known as Luther's table talk.

This is when he would sit around his table with his students and just talk about things and discuss things. And believe me, he was a man just given to bold, sort of radical ideas. Now again, why would a man like Martin Luther be able to take a papal bull, throw it into a fire at Wittenberg, and say, Pope, because you've opposed the truth, may you burn in the fires of hell? That's pretty radical, right? I mean, not even John Huss said things like that, right? Well, why was Luther able to get away with it? Again, you have to understand the political structure of Germany at that time.

England was pretty much a unified kingdom. France, pretty much a unified kingdom. Spain, pretty much a unified kingdom.

But for many different reasons, Germany was a conglomerate of different small principalities, where different small princes or lords or whatever, they were rarely called kings, but they would be called a prince or a magistrate, not a magistrate, a lord or a Graf, or whatever term they would use at that time, that would rule over these different territories within the German lands. This meant that you didn't need to get the political protection of the whole Holy Roman Empire, right? But if your particular leader, particularly here, Frederick the Wise, who ruled over Saxony, if he was sympathetic to the cause of Luther, he could protect Luther within his lands. And because he was more than just one prince among many, he was actually one of the electors.

He was one of the ones who actually had a role in the selection of the new emperor whenever that needed to happen. He was a guy with more authority, more juice, if you will, and able to exert his authority and truly protect Luther. But you see, this fragmentation of the German map and of the German territories shows you why, in this individual area, Luther could be safe in the city of Wittenberg.

Frederick the Wise actually had a very critical role in the historical development of the empire. Without his protection, Luther could have never really done what he did. Now, I will say this, though.

It's not like Frederick the Wise and Luther were friends. Supposedly, they only met once. And, you know, we don't know to what extent Frederick the Wise even believed the Reformation doctrines that Luther taught.

It may be that his support of Luther was a combination of theological approval and political calculation. But for whatever reason, he protected Luther and enabled the Reformation to gain this essential foothold in the area of Saxony in Germany. There's a particular painting that I like.

It shows Frederick the Wise standing in the foreground with Luther and several other of the early reformers, notably Philip Melanchthon, also behind him. And it shows Frederick the Wise, you know, prosperous and fat, you know, showing that he's mighty, you know, that he's a man of authority. It shows that he's very well-fed.

He's got gold chains showing that, you know, he's rich. But what else does he have? Most notably, he's holding swords. On either side of his body, he has his hand on the hilt of two swords.

Do you see the picture here? He's armed, he's powerful, he's wealthy, he's influential, and he protects these leaders of the Reformation. They stand safely behind him. I think it illustrates the idea very, very well.

So Luther could not have done what he did without having this powerful prince, this elector, on his side. Well, as it so happened, if it was up to the emperor, if it was up to the pope, they would have just taken Luther, put him on trial for heresy. They would have done the same thing to him that they did to John Hus.

But Frederick the Wise was able to make his case, even though Luther was formally excommunicated, Frederick the Wise was able to make the case that, no, you have to give Luther his day in court. Now, the same day in court that they promised to John Hus, but they never actually delivered on, Frederick the Wise said, listen, you have to do this. And again, he had enough political power to make this happen.

It was a very difficult decision for Luther whether or not he would travel from the safe region of Saxony, where Wittenberg was, and make the journey all the way over to Worms, where they were going to have this diet, that's spelled D-I-E-T, just like the kind of diet that you eat, except a diet was just an imperial word for the Holy Roman Empire, to describe a congress. It's a gathering, it's a congress. And so Luther had to travel from Wittenberg all the way to Worms.

He was going far outside of his own territory. The journey would take several days, and the question is, well, first of all, what's going to happen to him along the way, right? He's pretty vulnerable along the way, there and back. Secondly, when he gets to Worms, how does he know that they're not going to do to him just what they did to us a hundred years before? This was a very legitimate fear for Luther, but at the same time, he was determined that he would go.

And so he set out in April of 1521, determined to go to Worms, determined to make his case, knowing that the Pope had declared him a heretic, that the Emperor had declared everywhere you find the books of Martin Luther, you should burn them. And so he made this procession all the way from Wittenberg, all along the way through these different cities, all the way to Worms, until the time when he came into the city of Worms. And let me just describe it to you this way.

Basically, he was treated like a rock star when he came into Worms. And all along the way, the German people loved him. And when he came into the city of Worms, people were just lining the streets.

There were German knights there to protect him. The streets were thronged. His enemies were outraged because Luther had become such a popular figure that had captured the imagination of the German people.

And it was a very, very impressive thing. But Luther had to appear before the Diet of Worms, this congress of all these officials of the Holy Roman Emperor. And man, this would have been an awesome thing to go to.

You see, at the Diet of Worms, Luther stood before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V. He was the son of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain, the same ones who sent Columbus off on his journey. He sat before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. He sat before 24 dukes, 30 archbishops, seven ambassadors and papal nuncios.

And there were 206 people of nobility sitting in judgment on Martin Luther. And the council was presided over Johann Eck, the one who had bested Luther in the debate before. And so you had every reason to think that Luther, dressed in his humble monk's habit, before Johann Eck at the accusations and standing in the presence of the Emperor and all these dignitaries, you could see how he would be intimidated.

And to be honest, the Diet of Worms did not start out very well for Martin Luther. The first thing that Eck did was he pointed to a stack of books and he said, Luther, did you write these? Luther said, well, yeah, I wrote them. Secondly, will you recant? Do you know what it means to recant? It means to, you know, repent, to take back what you've written.

He said, Luther, will you retract these things that you've written? Luther said, well, I wrote those books. But he said, will I retract these things? Let me think about it. You know, you'd like to think that Luther just, yeah, you know, wrote it.

No, he said, you know what? This is a big deal. This is going to change the course of my life and the lives of many other people. Give me a night to think about this and to pray about this.

I don't want to act rashly on such an important question to offend God's word. So Eck said, okay, we'll adjourn for the day. Luther went to his room and prayed most the night.

The next day was April 18th, 1521, and it was perhaps the most important day in Martin Luther's life. It was sort of the conclusion to the Diet of Worms. On the second day of his appearance, he began his answer to the question.

Eck coordinated him again. He said, will you retract these writings? And Luther started saying, well, look, you know, my writings are on a lot of different subjects. You know, some of them are sort of pastoral and meant for edification.

Some of them are theological. And he goes on to explain why and this and that. And Eck says, cut out all the words.

Give me a simple answer, Luther. Are you going to recant these writings or not? That's when Luther said his famous statement. He said, therefore, your most serene majesty and your lordships, since they seek a simple reply, I will give one that was out horns or teeth and is in this fashion.

I believe in neither Pope nor councils alone, for it is perfectly well established that they have frequently aired as well as contradicted themselves. Unless then I shall be convinced by the testimony of the scriptures or by clear reason, I must be bound by those scriptures which has been brought forward by me. Yes, my conscience has been taken captive by these words of God.

I cannot revoke anything, nor do I wish to, since to go against one's conscience is neither safe nor right. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.

God help me. Amen. Now, when Luther said that, the council exploded in an uproar.

Luther and Eck started shouting at each other and Luther left the room with his arm raised in a gesture of either relief or triumph. The next day, the emperor told other people, listen, I don't see how one monk can be right and all the testimony of a thousand years of Christendom can be wrong. And Luther was allowed to leave the city of Worms safely on April 25th.

He seemed to escape the fate of John Hus. However, on April 25th, just a few days after the council was over, the Diet of Worms, the emperor placed a ban on Martin Luther. And this is what it meant.

It meant that anybody who gave Martin Luther food, drink, or shelter could be charged with high treason against the emperor. Basically, what the emperor did was he put out a contract on Luther's life. That's what he did.

Now, Luther had to make this long journey from Worms back to Wittenberg. And all that distance, he's out of his safe political area and the emperor has basically called for a hit on him, for a contract against his life. And so what happened? Frederick the Wise rode to the rescue.

Frederick the Wise sent out some people that were disguised as bandits and they kidnapped, so to speak, Luther. They kidnapped him for his own protection. And under the guard of these knights who were disguised as robbers, they brought Luther back to Saxony where he hid out at the castle of Wittenberg for about a year.

You see, the idea was that during this time when Luther was sequestered at the Wartburg in, did I say Wittenberg? That is the wrong word, at the Wartburg in Eisenach, during the time that he was there at this castle in Saxony, he was kept anonymous, he was kept safe. For a period of time, people didn't know where Luther was. He grew a beard, he kind of took on a disguise, he took an assumed name.

People really wondered what had happened to Martin Luther. You know, did the emperor kill him? Has he been kidnapped somewhere? People didn't really know. So in this fortress among the trees, Martin Luther remained until March of 1522.

He took the name Junker George, or Knight George, and he dressed as a layman, he grew a beard, he put on weight, and he gave himself to work. The most important work that he did during this time at the Wartburg was he translated the New Testament from the original Greek into German. Now, Luther didn't think that he was qualified just to be the only guy to translate it, and so he did bring in other colleagues on the work, but he did most all the work, and it really bears his stamp.

He worked very hard at the Wartburg, translating, this is a picture of the room at the Wartburg today, you can see the very room where Martin Luther translated the New Testament. And the testament in German, the New Testament was published a short time after. This actually was a monumental work with a deep and lasting influence on the language, the life, and the religion of the German people.

You remember that fragmented map of Germany that I showed you before, how it was divided into all these little principalities and such? Well, many of the people virtually spoke different languages in those different principalities. Oh, there was some similarity between the languages, but the dialects were so

diverse. A huge accomplishment that Martin Luther did with his New Testament and his later translation of the entire Bible was he gave the German-speaking peoples a common language, because they could all agree on this Bible.

And it was a very, very impressive accomplishment that he did, both accomplished hard work and intellectually. Well, Luther made a secret visit back to Wittenberg from the Wartburg in December of 1521. When he got there, he thought things were orderly enough, and he decided, he said, listen, the monks of the Augustinian order, if you want to leave the order of your monks' order, go ahead and do it, just do it after the first of the year.

But after Luther went back to the Wartburg, okay, he just went to Wittenberg on a visit, one of his associates started carrying things further than Luther wanted him to. You see, Karlstadt, this associate of Luther's that I discussed with you before, he was a monk, so he threw off his monk's habit, right? He renounced his monastic order. Well, that's okay.

But then he wanted to get married. Well, I guess that's okay too. He got himself engaged to a girl at 16 years old.

At Christmas, he delivered communion to the people in both kinds, bread and wine, which was against Roman Catholic practice. He started dressing as a layman. He attacked images in a violent tract, and he just started attacking many more things in the Roman Catholic Church than Luther ever did.

You see, for all the ways that Luther attacked the Roman Catholic Church, there were a lot of things that he didn't criticize, right? At least up to this point. Up to this point, Luther wasn't critical of the Mass. Luther wasn't critical of images and statues and all the things that surrounded them.

Luther wasn't critical of the Virgin Mary. Luther wasn't critical of infant baptism. Luther wasn't critical of many, many things in the Roman Catholic Church that many of his followers said, this is wrong too.

We should protest these things along with the other things that we are protesting. Well, Luther was very disturbed by this. You see, Karlstadt had a whole different method of reform and timing of reform than Luther did.

Luther's general attitude became like this. He said, we've accomplished so much in reforming these things and breaking away from the stuff where we are right here. Let's sort of consolidate our gains, and then we can go forward later.

Karlstadt said, forget that business. This is what the Bible says. Let's do it this way.

And so as we find out, there were many more radical reformers than Luther himself, and Karlstadt is a good example of them. Luther found Karlstadt's approach legalistic and thought that he made matters that should be up to people's choice. He thought that Karlstadt made them matters of necessity.

And so Karlstadt made many changes in the church and in the local town, and at the end of 1521, it was a very confused situation. So in March of 1522, Luther left the Wartburg and came back to Wittenberg, and he preached a series of sermons that were meant to balance out what he thought was a too radical pursuit of all these changes and a speed that was too dangerous. He deliberately preached these sermons in a monk's habit to show you can be spiritual and still be a monk.

It was a slap in the face to Karlstadt and those who wanted to radically change things. And so Luther just had a different attitude of reform than these other people who would be more radical than he was. And so from this time forward, Luther fought a war on two fronts, against Catholics and against those who he regarded as fanatics.

He called them in German, Schwermer, which basically means fanatics or people who buzz around like bees. And because of this, Luther now found himself in the middle between those who were more radical reformers than he was and the Roman Catholics on the other side. Well, 1525 ended up being a very important year in the life of Martin Luther.

At the very height of what's known as the Peasants' War in 1525, he married Catherine von Bora, and it's a beautiful story. You know, there was a whole group of nuns who had escaped from their nunnery and they came and they came to Luther and they said, hey, you're the leader of this reformation. What should we do? And Luther basically said, well, you should get married.

And so one by one, the nuns got married off, but not Catherine von Bora. She didn't get married off. She refused to marry anybody because she had her sights on Luther.

But Luther didn't want to get married at the time, but basically he agreed to it. And Catherine von Bora ended up being a wonderful, wonderful wife for Martin Luther. She gave him a good looking after.

She proved a very admirable wife and a good businesswoman. Luther's home meant a great deal to him, and it was sort of the idea that domestic life was very, very important to the Lord and to Martin Luther. And so Luther's marriage to Catherine von Bora was very important, and she had a huge influence on his subsequent life.

He called her My Katie, and she herself was a real sort of firebrand. There's a famous story of one time Luther was all depressed and he was given to this, these fits of occasional depression. Sometimes just he was very melancholy, believing his work was all in vain and such.

And so he's just moping around the house for several days, feeling very, very discouraged. And as the story goes to sort of challenge this, his wife comes down, Catherine von Bora, she comes down dressed, totally in black as if she's in mourning for the dead. And she comes down and Luther takes a look and goes, what are you doing? And she goes, well, I'm in mourning.

Somebody's died. He goes, don't be foolish woman. Who's died? What are you talking about? And she says, well, I thought surely God must be dead the way that you're moping around as a depressed man.

And Luther had to laugh at that. And it just shook him out of his depression, showing him how foolish it was. Well, 1525 was more than just the year that Martin Luther married this remarkable woman who proved to be such a wonderful wife for him.

It was also the year of the Peasants' War. And we don't have time to go into many details about the Peasants' War, but nearly a hundred thousand peasants were killed in this uprising against the German nobility. You see, you have to understand that Martin Luther set in motion forces that he wanted to control, but he could not control.

He could not control the more radical reformers. And he could also could not control the way that his message resounded in the ears of the common people of Germany. Because many of the common people

of Germany, many of the serfs, they were virtually slaves under their landowners, very, very ill-treated.

And when these common people heard that maybe the Pope didn't have the same authority over them that they had once heard that he really had, it wasn't a big step at all for them to say, well, maybe my Lord shouldn't have the same authority over me that once I thought he should have. And these ideas, owing to the initiative and the freedom of the individual, sparked, again, fed by some very fiery preachers, fed the whole Peasants' War. And as I said, nearly a hundred thousand peasants died, and many Protestant ministers were hanged by Catholic princes.

Worst of all, the peasants believed that they were betrayed by Luther in this cause. That's how they felt. They felt, Luther, you started this whole thing.

Because when the whole Peasants' War began, Luther spoke out against the peasants. He said, you have no place in taking up arms to defend your cause. You should not be doing this at all.

The peasants felt betrayed. Actually, in one respect, you can say that Luther was right, right? He had no interest in fomenting a political revolution that would sweep all over Germany. But here's the other thing.

And I think this made Luther somewhat boxed in. Do you remember the image that we looked at before of Frederick the Wise there, you know, with his hands on his sword, protecting Luther? If Luther became a preacher of political and economic revolution, how long do you think someone like Frederick the Wise would protect him? Not very long, right? Luther instinctively understood that if he got behind these popular revolutions, there would be a sense in which he would be ending his own support that he needed so badly. Well, as time went on, there were different approaches that tried to be made between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans.

There was a final meeting at Augsburg in 1530, which was actually the last attempt to patch things up between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. Luther could not attend the meetings because it was too dangerous for him. But his colleague, Philip Melanchthon, presented the Lutheran views as non-offensively as he possibly could, but it didn't work.

The Roman Catholic Council still demanded concessions that Luther and Melanchthon would not make, and the division became final. 1530, you could say, there was no turning back. But between 1517 and 1530, many people thought that maybe they could reconcile, maybe they could come back together, but not after 1530.

Sadly, the end of Luther's life was not very encouraging. He saw a lot of things that made him discouraged and depressed. He saw the papacy gaining strength again after the preparations for the Council of Trent.

He saw the growing menace of Catholic military might. He wrote some things at the end of his life that I wonder if Luther in heaven now doesn't greatly regret. He wrote things like, against the Anabaptists, against the Jews, against the papacy of Rome, founded by the devil, and many of these were violent, violent, coarse, and angry tracks.

In particular, his controversial writings against the Jews at the end of his life were a total contradiction of his earlier graciousness towards them. It may have been, and I would have to say this is just my opinion, but it may be that his seemingly irrational and wild anger against the Jews was caused by some form of dementia in his last years. In his last years, Luther was often ill and depressed.

This may be medical, but it was also spiritual, because Luther was discouraged that his work had not had a greater impact on the daily life and morals of the common people. In many ways, he had launched an important and necessary theological reformation, but not a revival. That revival would come later, based, of course, on his work.

His health was particularly bad at the end. He got very discouraged at different times. But yet, early in the year 1546, Luther was asked to go to Eisleben, the place where he was born, to mediate in a quarrel between two arrogant young princes, Count Albrecht and Gebhardt of Mansfield.

He was old and ill, but he still had a lot of authority, and basically he brought these two warring princes together in a wonderful sense of Christian reconciliation. But you see, the chill of death came upon him while he was on this journey, and he died at Eisleben, the same city where he was born, on February 18th. A remarkable life.

Now, let me just conclude with a few final points about Luther. First of all, the Luther House in Wittenberg is an outstanding place to visit. If you ever have the occasion to go there and do a tour of the Luther House, it is well worth it.

It is a fantastic museum. Secondly, we should also remember that Luther was a very accomplished musician who wrote many great hymns of the faith and who really valued music. He regarded music as the second most important discipline as compared to theology.

He, of course, wrote his famous hymn, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, that idea, a mighty fortress is our God, among many other songs as well. At the root of it all, we should remember that Martin Luther was a man who was profoundly converted by the Spirit of God. As Luther said, did God call me on account of my holy life or on account of my pharisaical religion or account of my prayers, fastings, and works? Never.

Well then, it is certain that God did not call me on account of my blasphemies, persecutions, and oppressions. What prompted him to call me? His grace alone. That is what Luther was at his root.

He was a man profoundly changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and this carried out into everything in his life. At the same time, we can sympathize with those in Luther's day who wanted to take his great work even further and wanted to truly apply biblical principles to everything, including infant baptism, including the relationship between church and state, including the organization of the church itself, including the mass, including the veneration of images, and such as this. You see, in some ways, we would say that Luther, what he did is priceless.

The church owes a tremendous debt to Martin Luther. As I said in our previous lecture, I can argue to you that he's the most influential man of the last millennium, of the last thousand years. But nevertheless, I think that we would have to say with the beautiful hindsight of history that Luther should have gone further.

As Charles Spurgeon said, what a blessing it would have been in Luther's time if the Reformation had been carried out completely. Great as the work was, it was in some points a very superficial thing and left deadly errors untouched. Now, many of the people who wanted to touch those deadly errors were sort of crazy in themselves, but yet I think all in all, while not meaning to offend the memory of Martin Luther, we would say he could have gone even farther in what he did.

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