

# Anabaptist History (Day 6) the Early Life of Zwingli and Conrad Grebel

by Dean Taylor

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*This sermon explores the lives of Zwingli and Conrad Grebel, two key figures in the early Anabaptist movement, and their contributions to the Reformation.*

**Duration:** 1:12:38

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:26

**Topics:** "Church History", "Reformation Theology"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the intense theological and political debates surrounding the Reformation in Zurich, focusing on the clash between the young radicals led by Conrad Grebel and the reform efforts of Ulrich Zwingli. It explores the challenges of reforming a city deeply entrenched in traditional practices, particularly regarding the Mass and church rituals. The sermon highlights the tension between the zealous desire for immediate change and the cautious approach of established leaders like Zwingli, leading to a significant rift within the reform movement.

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## Transcript

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these men and women who have lived before. And God, we don't thank them, but we thank what you have done through them. And we're inspired by that, and just like you wrote the writer of Hebrews there, that we are encompassed about by a great cloud of witness.

I pray, God, that we can be encouraged by these examples, and look at our life, look at our world today, our church today, the compromises that we're making, the different things that we're struggling with, the imbalances that we're falling into, and be able to look up to the Word of God and to be able to put that Word into practice in this century as well. Oh, God, please do it in our life, Father, like you did in the days of old. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

All right, the handout, too, it's a little different. Think of this today as my notes. It's not in a handout form like before, but there's so many quotes and primary sources that I wanted to bring out that I just didn't have time to put all those typing in there, so I'll try to correct some of the misspelled words and things as I go along.

But this is basically just my notes, and I want you to have these so that you'll have some of these resources, but don't think of it as a handout so much as we've had in the days previous. With Conrad Grebel, and we'll talk about him in a second, there's no one been more researched than him. As a matter of fact, Harold S. Bender, fortunately, the man who really helped Mennonite Anabaptist history in this last century, he made it his personal goal to dig as much as he could out of Harold S. Bender.

I think he did his doctoral dissertation on Harold S. Bender, I'm not sure, but nevertheless, he did a lot of research. And there was something that makes our detail on Grebel more than everyone else was the fact that he wrote a bunch of letters to a teacher that he had by the name of Vadian. And these letters, fortunately, were well-preserved at the end of his life, Vadian took those things and put them, and they ended up in the archives in Switzerland, and so we have these little personal letters that he wrote.

We have the personal letters that he wrote when he was a young, non-Born-Again student in Paris, I'm going to share some of those, and we have the ones as he kept struggling all through his time with Zwingli and through the beginning of the Radical Reformation with the early Anabaptists, and those struggles come out in those letters. And so it's impressive that we have those. We don't really have that much detail for, I don't think, hardly anybody else.

It's a rare accomplishment that we even have that. Bender considers Conrad Grebel to be the founder of the Anabaptist movement. That's big, you know, hotly debated these days, and well, there was different places where it was started.

There was also a Holland start and an Austria, you know, different areas of Germany start. But to make it easy and to make it down to the point, I think that whether or not he founded it or not, the fact is that he had a definite role to play in the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. And as you can kind of see, they didn't just come out of nowhere.

The whole point of last week was to try to develop the fact that they were coming along and this birth into this thing that happened here with the Anabaptists, which is a part of our heritage today. So let's start off, though, with Zwingli, because you can't talk about the early Swiss brethren, the early Anabaptists, without talking about Zwingli. Zwingli was the priest that was there in Zurich, became the pastor there in Zurich, which had all the run-ins with the early Anabaptists.

So to understand them, we'll talk about Zwingli. Oh, did you not get one? Sorry. There you go.

A little picture of young Zwingli there on your handout. The mountain man from peasant stock, born up in the mountains about 40 miles outside of Zurich, and was born in 1484. Now, that's just a few years before what in our common history of America? Yeah, 1492, Columbus discovered America.

So just kind of give you a time frame. Sometimes you don't try to think of what's going on, but that's the kind of time that these people were born in, born in 1484. He had seven brothers and six sisters.

As a child, he learned to play six instruments. Zwingli was born of common stock, but his parents were able to afford to send him to some of the finest universities in Switzerland. They spent their money on trying to make sure their children had that kind of an education.

He was a good student, did well in school in the University of Vienna, and entered there in the winter semester of 1498. But he was a sinner, and he lived a wicked life, which he even later confessed, and he was actually expelled from Vienna. He re-enrolled in the summer semester of 1500.

His activities in 1499 are unknown. Zwingli continued his study in Vienna until 1502, after which he transferred to the University of Basel, where he received his Master of Art degree in 1506. After that, he was ordained as a priest and got his first parish assignment.

Now, here's something that happened in his first assignment. In those days, the Swiss were famous for their mercenaries, which means, you know, people who were paid to be soldiers. It's one thing to be a soldier when people are attacking your country, but it's another thing to actually, that's your job, so you have whole groups and guilds of people who different princes would hire you to fight their battles over here and hire them to fight their battles over there, and everybody loved the Swiss mercenaries.

As a matter of fact, has anybody ever seen pictures of the Vatican, and you see those Swiss guards? That's still in memory of the Swiss mercenaries that they used. As a matter of fact, it was the Swiss guards that defended Rome in 1527, in which those guards still commemorate. But that whole idea of these Swiss mercenaries was common in Switzerland and actually was very much part of their economy.

They did so much of it that it made up a part of the way you made money in Switzerland. But he saw some brutal things in his first assignment, and he wrote about it and preached about it, and it got him a little bit into trouble. In 1515, he witnessed the slaughter of 6,000 men of his Swiss countrymen, the mercenaries.

He thought that this was wicked, and he cried out, and he said, we're selling blood for gold. You need to add an L there into your thing. I wrote blood for God.

Blood for gold. However, a lot of people actually liked this, and he got in trouble with that, and also probably because of his sinful life. He was still living a very wicked life with different women and things like that.

And all those things combined got him kicked out of his first assignment there as his parish priest. The next place he went to, he went to assignment. It was a much bigger church assignment, and there it had a big shrine to the Virgin Mary.

It was a very typically Catholic place, and he was able to see some of those abuses that he was there. He exchanged scholarly letters with a circle of Swiss humanists and began to study the writings of Erasmus. So he began to be, that writing that we talked about Erasmus and all this new talk of humanism and just practical sense, surely this isn't the way men should live, is the kind of thing he was attracted to.

Zwingli took the opportunity to meet Erasmus while Erasmus was there in his town in Basel. He was there between August of 1514 and May of 1516. Zwingli ended up taking a kind of a pacifist idea with war, and it believes that can be traced to his influence on Erasmus.

And then in 1516, remember what happened? I doubt you remember. I wouldn't remember. But in 1516, Erasmus printed that Greek-Latin New Testament.

Remember that? And like I said, it was revolutionary in their time. Remember, there had not been a different version of the Bible translated for over a thousand years. Well, Zwingli loved this, and this whole idea of the Bible in Greek was revolutionary to him.

He said, quote, nothing but God will prevent me from acquiring Greek, not for the sake of fame, but for the sake of the scriptures. It's said that he actually hand-copied many of the epistles of Paul and would carry them around with him, and he would memorize the New Testament in Greek, and he began to be a very

good student of the Bible. After that assignment, he started growing a little bit of popularity and such, and he ended up getting a job at the church in Zurich.

On January 1st, 1519, which was his birthday, he was born on January 1st, he gave his first sermon in Zurich. Deviating from the practice in that day, what they would usually do, and it still happens in Anglican churches today, Episcopalian churches today, Catholic churches, if they would have a certain lectern that you would read, the Bible readings, this is what we're going to read. But he decided, I'm going to do something different, and again, this was something new, it was something exciting at the time.

He said, so he went to make his announcement, and everybody there gathered around to see this new priest, what's he going to be like, you know? And he opened this huge Bible, and he said, starting tomorrow, I'm beginning to preach, through the entire Bible, through the entire New Testament, beginning at the book of Matthew, section by section at a time. This was something completely new. It was the beginning of expository preaching.

And so he just opened the Bible and began to preach the word of God to the people, and they loved it. Now remember, this was a time when the church hardly, no one even hardly ever heard the Bible. The priest didn't even have a Bible, and now a man was going to stand in our pulpit and begin to preach the Bible word for word.

As this is 1519, who can say what happened just a few years earlier in 1517? To kind of give you the idea of the atmosphere of the day. 1517, October 31st, what happened? Yeah, yeah, Luther's thesis was knocked to the Wittenberg Castle Church door on Halloween night, October 31st, 1517. To give you the tone, this is now 1519.

All that's starting to happen that we read about Luther yesterday, and now we're getting to the point with this reformation spreading, and Zwingli wants to get in on this act and begin to talk about this new exciting thing that's coming out by reading the Bible. He continues to read and interpret the books on subsequent Sundays until he reached the end of the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament epistles. Later, especially when he started to have differences with the Anabaptists who were challenging him, he went to the Old Testament and ended up spending the rest of his whole life reading the Old Testament.

Had sort of a bad effect on him. The early Anabaptists was one of the ones, kind of like the Waldensians did, that they emphasized the New Testament, particularly Jesus Christ, was the interpretation of the Old Testament and such. So he's there, things are going on, he's got great success, people are finally flocking into the church, and the story says that as he's out in the, oh they have some baths, resort areas that Zwingli would go out to, they came and told him the announcement, the plague has hit Zurich.

He came back to Zurich and started there with his people and spent the time there. There's different stories about how much time he spent with the actual sick people. I think he was certainly involved in that way.

And through all this, unfortunately, Zwingli ended up contracting the plague himself and almost died. And this made a profound effect on Zwingli. It came to the point where he was actually thinking he was going to die and he started writing a few songs or poems.

Excuse me. Here is one of those poems, the end of the one where you can see that he was thinking he was going to die. He wrote this.

Thy purpose fulfill. Nothing can be too severe for me. I am thy vessel.

For you to make whole or break to pieces. Since if you take hence my spirit from this earth, you do it so that it will not grow evil and will not mar the pious lives of others. So again, it was a very pious way.

He looked to the will of God as being able to take him or leave him. And fortunately for Zwingli, I guess, is that he pulled through and he seemed to have a healing. And so he attributed that to God, of course.

Everyone did in those days. Again, the plague was not just something that you caught from a little bacteria from a rat, a flea off the back of a rat. It was something that was a curse from God.

And so when you were healed of that, of course, you would see it as God's favor on you. So about 1521, he started to make good progress in the Reformation in Zurich. And he was making his plans to start a Bible college.

He had started gathering young men around him who wanted to start to study with him. Again, to remind you, the Reformation now is also building in Europe. Luther now is starting to inflame Rome.

The excommunication is going around. And now they're starting all that talk about heading to worms with all his inflammatory writings. Well, these writings are also getting to Zurich, and he wants to get in on that and starts to talk about this wonderful thing that's happening by us discovering the Bible.

By November of 1521, he meets a young vagabond by the name of Conrad Grebel, and he joins his group. And this group, Zwingli praised pacifism in this early day, the very early days, still very much under the Erasmus influence. Harold S. Bender said that he praised pacifism and the early Christian community of goods.

He stated that even that unbaptized children were not damned and that infant baptism had no scriptural support. Those are some of the things he was saying in those early meetings there with those early Anabaptists. So things are growing.

There's a publisher in Zurich by the name of Froschauer. And the word Frosch in Swiss was the word frog, and he'd always make a big to-do about his name. And when you go to Zurich today, they have a statue with his name on there as a frog and all that.

As a matter of fact, we were there with your dad and all that, and we were looking for this printing press that used to be there. And we heard that Zurich still has this place where Froschauer had his printing press. And what I'm about to share here is that this Froschauer, he started taking these writings of Luther and these tracts and things and started spreading them around Zurich.

Well, when I was there, over there this last summer, it's funny, we started looking for it. We'd go down the street, Froschauer Street and all that. We were looking for it, and finally, I couldn't find this place, but everybody kept saying, oh, it's around here somewhere, it's around there somewhere.

And finally, somebody gave me the directions that it was in this movie theater place. It plays these, I guess, movies. So we walked in there.

I believe it was your dad and Dave Rousseau and myself. And the guy was there on the counter, and we were asking him about this place. Did you know that somewhere around here there was a printing press in the 1500s that was famous for the reform of the city and everything? And it's funny, this guy that was at

the counter, he said, well, I don't know of anything like this.

And all of a sudden he goes, wait a minute. I'll show you a picture of this tomorrow, hopefully. So he takes us out, and he said, wait a minute.

And he takes us out on the street, and we look up, and he said, is that him? And there was this big painting of Froschauer on the wall in front of this movie theater, and that, sure enough, was it. And this printing press was there, and it was a hotbed of pouring out these radical teachings that were from the early Lutherans and even from the early Anabaptists. And he printed the Froschauer Bible from that place, which began to be controversial.

It was a Bible written in the Swiss dialect. All right. But while they were there one night, it's starting to make all these radical changes.

Zwingli's starting to preach the pulpit, one more challenge after another, one more challenge. The monasteries are starting to get abuse to them in certain areas. People are complaining and all that.

And while they're in this place there, this Froschauer's printing shop, it's getting late at night. They're working on their papers and everything, but it's Lent now. Does anybody know what Lent is? What is the Lenten season? Does anybody know that? In the Roman Catholic Church and all the Catholic churches, they would have a fast period before Easter.

And during that time, you would have a 40-day fast. And it's not usually a complete fast, but in those days, it was actually a legal thing. You could only eat certain foods.

And one thing you could not do, particularly on Friday, but during that particular part of the Lenten fast, is you couldn't eat meat. Well, here they're starting to talk about all these rituals and all that thing, and here they're printing all this stuff right there. And the owners of the shop there start bringing out a plate of sausage.

And it may seem like a small thing to us, but it was actually a huge deal. So he starts carving out this sausage and handing it to everybody, and they start eating this sausage here during this Lenten time. Now, it got around that they did this, and it caused a big to-do.

It says here, The first public controversy regarding Zwingli's preaching broke out during the Lenten season in 1522. On the first fasting Sunday, March 9, Zwingli and about a dozen other participants consciously transgressed the fasting rule by cutting and distributing two smoked sausages. This happened at Christoph Froschauer's workshop.

Zwingli defended the act in a sermon, which was published on April 16, under the title, Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods. Just to give you an idea. You have a question? It seems.

I was trying to read that also. He was at least there in letting it go on. Oh, it says do not partake.

Okay. Thank you very much. Yeah.

Yeah, right. He's important. Like Jacob said, they actually got thrown in jail over this.

It's a big deal. They're eating sausage, and he got thrown in jail. Jacob's reminding us that in the writings, it doesn't say that Zwingli actually ate it, but he was their president and supported the eating of this

sausage.

Seems a bit ridiculous, yes, but that's the kind of practices they had. Now, this was common. Some of these Catholic things go way back in history.

I mean, a 40-day fast before Easter actually dates way back into the early church. Now, some of this rigorous stuff with this food and not that food or this food or that food you didn't have, but it actually does have some early history to it. So breaking with that was a serious thing.

But this just gives you an idea of the tone of things that were in the time of these people. All right. I'm going to come back, and we'll get Zwingli later.

But let's start talking about the young Conrad Greville. All right. I wrote there on my notes that, again, we have fortunately 69 letters written by this man.

They've been preserved. They were written between September of 1517 and July of 1525. Two were written to Zwingli, one to Thomas Munzer, that radical guy who was doing the peasant revolt, and one to a co-worker named Andreas Kasselberger of Zurich.

Fifty-six letters were written to Weydian, and that's where we get most of these very interesting details. Binder said, most of these letters, however, were written during Greville's student years at Vienna in Paris and throw practically no light on the important phase of his life as an Anabaptist leader. I disagree.

I think some of these quotes from his early life I think are interesting to me because what they show me is that a young man who may be struggling through something in his life can still find God and do something very impressive. And I'm going to bring out just a few of those quotes so that you can see. A little bit about his education.

First, let me skip over to his prominent family. Conrad Greville was born in 1498 as the second of six children of Jacob Greville and his wife Dorothy Fries. For a century and a half, the Greville family had been one of the leading families of the city of Zurich, one of the small number of wealthy partisan families of a lesser landed nobility who had for years directed the political, economic, and military affairs of the city.

The family had always had one or more members in the city council and usually furnished the guild masters for one of the aristocratic merchant guilds. Greville had frequently served as magistrate his father, and for two generations before the Reformation, no important political event took place in Zurich in which a Greville did not have a part. The most influential of all the Grevilles was Jacob, his father, a wealthy iron merchant who reached the peak of his successful career in politics in the first year of the Reformation.

He was just coming to his peak. He came from a very wealthy, I mean a moderately wealthy, not like the kings and things, a moderately wealthy, but certainly a very influential family. He had relatives in the monastery.

He had people that were in all parts of this place, and in Zurich it only had about 6,000 inhabitants. So you can imagine that Conrad Greville knew just about everybody in the town. I don't know, maybe it's kind of like living in Lancaster County.

I've noticed that you can't go to Walmart, you can't go somewhere without knowing somebody there, and it's probably even more so in their day that everywhere he went people would have known him. So when

you start to think of the things that he did and the things that he accomplished, it kind of makes you ponder it in a different way, understanding that everybody knew him, everybody knew his father, everybody knew his mother, and everybody knew his dog, and that in what he was doing they either said, well, that's because he's always been that way or something like that. So, of course, you can imagine his prestigious father, one of the very best for his young son, Conrad.

Conrad's education, back to page 3 there. Conrad grew up in the castle of Gruningen, a few miles east of Zurich, where his father was a magistrate during Conrad's boyhood days. He actually grew up in the castle there.

His education must have begun in Latin schools of the Grossmunster church in Zurich, known as the Carolina, because it was supposed to have been founded by Charlemagne. The whole story of the Grossmunster is that Charlemagne decided that he wanted a church there because years earlier, centuries earlier before Charlemagne, Charlemagne was crowned king of the Holy Roman Empire in the year 800, and it first started this whole concept of these Germanic people. But centuries earlier, the legend was that there was two people, nobility, out there living in this area by the name of Felix and Regula.

And as they were there, and also their slave, and as they were there, persecution came in, and these new leaders of this area had decided to accept Christianity. But persecution came in, and they ended up getting in trouble, and they ended up getting their heads chopped off. So when they chopped their heads off, the story goes that the heads chopped off, but then Felix and Regula and the slave went and picked up the heads, and walked over a little bit, kneeled down, and prayed for their persecutors.

So if you ever see pictures of Zurich, the seal of Zurich, it has a bunch of guys without heads, cut their heads off, holding a head. If you ever see the picture, that's why. And that's why you see people with names like Felix and Regula are some of the most common names for people who were born in Zurich.

Charlemagne, years later, says he's out on a hunting trip, and as he's there, he goes and he sees something like the story that he goes to shoot a deer, and the deer is kneeling down at this spot, and he realizes that this is the spot that this happened, where these people got their heads chopped off, and so he consecrates this place, we're going to build a church there, and that's the spot of the Grossmunster that all this stuff happened. That's the spot where this thing happened. So that's the area that he grew up with.

It's a very attractive church. I'll show you pictures of that as the week goes on. His university career began in October 1514, when he went for the winter semester at the University of Basel.

The newer humanism was just beginning to come in. Glarion, the outstanding Swiss humanist of the younger school, had just come to Basel and established a bursa, or a boarding school academy. This was the idea, people would go there and just study all the time, kind of like coming to faith builders, and study under these certain teachers, especially these humanist teachers.

Since all the students of the philosophical faculty were required to live in one of the numerous areas, numerous little community houses, Grebel joined this little group, and fortunately, Glarion was an excellent teacher, and under this tutelage, the young Grebel was introduced for the first time to the world of humanist learning and teaching. Basel was barely beginning to come into its glory as a humanist center. Erasmus had come two months before, in August 1514, to remain there through winter.

So this was really a hub of learning there. But through this time, his father, though, wanted him to have some influence with something other than just the Swiss, and so he got him a chance to go to study in France, in Paris. But here's an interesting little thing that ended up happening that caused some trouble later on.

That in those days, France and Switzerland, they had some problems, maybe still to this day, had some difficulty getting along. But the king of France was always one of these mercenaries, and so he had to keep good relationships with the Swiss. And so they would pay some of these merchants, they would pay some of these leaders, to kind of influence them to, hey, be friendly with France, so you don't forget about us.

Well, one of those people that kind of took a little payoff was his dad. Now, it wasn't a payoff totally against the country. All it was was a stipend, a scholarship, for his son to go to college in Paris.

And it bothered Conrad a little bit, and as he discusses that with his father, he discusses it, you know, I don't know if this is right, and his father said, well, here's the thing. Citizens of Zurich are not allowed to take money for scholarship to go to Paris. But when you're a student, you're not really a citizen, and so we can take the money and you can go to Paris.

And besides, everybody's doing it. Some of the leading priests of Grossmünster is doing it, everybody's doing it, so just go to Paris and stop worrying about it. So he did.

He took the money from Emperor Maximilian, and Conrad Grebel made it to Paris. Before that, in the same time period, he would drink more to excess than even some of his friends, and one day he got into a brawl so bad that some of these French students were killed. And it was terrible.

It didn't seem like he himself did the killing, but it was something that put a mark on him and infuriated his father again. It was a low moment for him, a very low moment. He also suffered from illness due to his loose living.

His father, and finally his father, becoming incensed at reports that he had received from him, cut out all the money that he was sending him. It was a low moment, and as a moment of introspection in one of the letters, he wrote to Wadie and his old friend and confessed to him that he believed that some of the pains and sicknesses that he was having was due to some of the diseases that he had incurred from his loose living with the parties and things of Paris. He had muscle cramps.

He had boils and sores on his back. His feet would ache and his joints would swell, sometimes to the point where he couldn't write. And, of course, we don't know for sure what he had, but he attributed himself to his terrible living that he had there in his life in Paris.

He asked Wadie to keep that confession to himself. And even Wadie began to threaten his friendship and practically ceased writing to him. Under the blows of fate and circumstances, Grebel lost heart and returned home to Zurich, his high hopes disappointed, without completing his studies or securing any kind of degree.

It was the end of his student days that he determined to seek a reconciliation with his parents and Wadie in hopes for some career in his home city, although his self-confidence had been badly shaken and his inner life was full of conflict. He signed one of his letters in that day. Conrad Grebel of Zurich, a poor, little, miserable friend of yours.

That's what he wrote to Wadie. And that's the way he felt of himself. A loser! You know? And why do I bring up these facts? Because God's about to redeem this loser and every one of us in this room can be thanked of what God had did in this young man's life.

And so don't ever give up on people. God didn't give up on Conrad Grebel, and let's not give up on people. At the university, he did learn Latin, Greek, and probably Hebrew, learned to write Latin well and to appreciate the great classic writers and scholars, but he failed to acquire any new religious concerns or attitude.

He did not become a pagan, Harold S. Bender says, for he retained his traditional faith in his church and her dogma, but neither did he become an Erasmian reformer. Waiting to go home, he needed the money, and he was upset when Wadian married his sister, and he didn't even have the money to go to the wedding. So then he finally, though, makes his way back and to get back to town.

He gets back to Zurich, and it's a hotbed of things that are starting to go on. Three weeks after his return to Zurich, the town is buzzing with the fact that the pope wants all of Luther's writings to be found and burned. So he's just getting into town, all this excitement, and that they want now to actually hire some more people for mercenaries to go fight the northern Italy, and Zwingli, as he was in his other Paris assignment, is not liking this at all and says, we're not going to do that, and he convinces the city council, and the city council says no to all the pope's desires there.

His father had made plans for Conrad to go to Pisa then to study there, and so he actually got, first he was complaining, one of his reasons to come back home was, besides, I feel terrible about receiving this money for Maximilian. Well, his father got a scholarship to go to Pisa, and he goes, okay, I'll go to Pisa. So then he decided to go to Pisa.

But then something changed in his life. Not a conversion yet, but something changed. He decided not to go to Pisa because he met a young lady.

He met a beautiful young lady by the name of Barbara, and it would seem that his plans to go to study in Pisa were changed by his falling in love with this girl named Barbara. Apparently she was beautiful, but there was one big problem with Barbara. As so classic in this time period, she wasn't of noble birth.

It was beneath her. To marry a woman like this would mean to marry someone beneath you. And besides that, in those days, it wasn't just about the noble birth.

When you married someone, you got their dowry. You got money. So your one chance to marry good is to marry someone who has this big dowry, and it can kind of get you started in life.

You go marry a poor woman, you're starting off on a pretty bad foot. But Conrad Grebel was in love. It's 1521, and he is now 23 years old.

He needs to start doing something if he starts to think about marriage. At odds with his father, he finally decides to leave home and to seek a career as a proofreader in Basel. But this project likewise did not succeed, and after only two months in the printing establishment, from August and September to 1521, he returned to Zurich.

And when he returned, he hoped to break down the bitter opposition of his parents to his proposed marriage. His father did actually say, when you're in Basel, when you're there, feel free if you need a

mistress or something, we'll help pay for that. If you need a mistress, that's okay.

But marrying someone beneath you would be absolutely unacceptable. Failing in this, of convincing his parents that this would be okay, he suddenly went through his marriage in February of 1522. He did it one day when his father was gone.

His father had left down on a big business trip, and when his father was gone on the big business trip, he went and married Barbara. And the family was not happy. His mother, it says, was just furious, and she was crying and bawling.

When the father came home, he, of course, was upset as well. The break with his family was complete and was only partially restored, that he can have relationships, by the mediation of one of the city pastors and an associate of Zwingli. This was the same year, this was 1522, and just to give you a reminder, this is when Luther had finished his discourse there in Worms, and Karlstadt now had, and Wittenberg was starting to offer up the sacrifice of the mass in two different forms, and the Reformation was beginning to kick in.

Zwingli now is doing this in Zurich. Conrad Grebel is newly married, and that's the atmosphere that we have. But then, in 1522, the change.

First, a three-minute break, and we'll come back, and we'll hear the rest of the story. What we're going to get into now is the seeds of what birthed the Anabaptists, the change in Conrad Grebel's life and these early radicals. It's an impressive scene, and I'm going to, again, try to bring out some of these sources.

Again, remember the purpose here, we're not skimming over the top. All of this usually makes, if we're lucky, one footnote in a Reformation history book. You know what I mean? For us, it matters.

And so, we're going deeper into some of these different writings and letters to understand their soul, to understand their struggles in a better way. And so, that's why I'm going to bring you, I'm going to now bring out several letters, a book that your pastor gave me. Conrad Grebel's Son of Zurich has lots of those early letters that are found nowhere else in print.

And then, The Cup and the Cross, I very much appreciate many of the quotes that they bring out, and I'm going to be repeating some of those here in this section. The 1522 Change. Newlywed Conrad Grebel, unfortunately, didn't keep a journal, but what we have of him, the letters are wonderful.

But he's newlywed, and they ended up with a child pretty soon. We don't have the details of his conversion, but the conversion is obvious. Bender says, In 1522 marked an epoch for Conrad Grebel which led to the transformation of his entire life.

He said, and I have underlined, Unfortunately, there is a hiatus, I mean a pause, in his correspondence for nine months during this vital period. But from the middle of the year 1522, it is evident that Grebel was a changed man. Now, he was deeply interested in the progress of the evangelical cause in Zurich.

He became an ardent partisan of Zwingli and his reform program. He started to just go to Zwingli, and he wanted to hear what Zwingli had to say. He wanted to be a part of this circle.

He wanted to hear those things that Zwingli was talking about. The spirit and atmosphere, as well as the content of Zwingli, his furthest correspondence, are so radically different from what they were before that

we must believe that a genuine conversion and renewal of his life took place somewhere during the spring of 1522. Bender suggests the explanation is not far to seek.

Grebel was won by the powerful gospel preaching of Ulrich Zwingli is his hypothesis, and I think it's a decent hypothesis. Zwingli was bringing in lots of people who were changing their life. And so I think it's a decent theory.

Nevertheless, you do see an absolutely different man in his letters now. And during this conversion, it's now 1522, Conrad Grebel didn't know he had four years to live. And in the next four years, he would do something that people are still talking about today.

It just makes you ponder your life sometimes. You think everything's gonna go on this way or that way, and what purpose does God have in my life? All that rustling of his years, all those things, God seemed to have his hand on him, but now, four years left, God is working in Conrad Grebel's life to do something extraordinary. Henceforth, until his untimely death in the summer of 1526, he was suddenly a new man.

At this time, he showed a laser-sharp purpose, direction, and leadership. In the forefront of those who were bringing in the new era, first for a year and a half as an enthusiastic supporter of Zwingli, and then for over two years as the founder of the new Anabaptist movement. During those years, these early months of 1522, a very close friendship developed between Zwingli and Grebel.

Zwingli apparently was, during that time, he was hoping to start a school, kind of like Calvin did there in Zurich, where people would come and study the Bible. He actually was gonna have Conrad Grebel be one of these teachers at the school. He even had Conrad Grebel writing a poem at the end of one of Zwingli's new books.

And so they had this very good relationship, and it was something that was growing more and more between the two. He and Barbara soon had their first child, and they named the boy Theophil. It's a Latin name, but you can start to see his conversion.

It means lover of God. He continued to study the Bible, and he began to feel the aches of a genuine calling. But he strived to know the Bible even more.

He did not feel that he knew the Bible enough. So now he starts to get in on this Reformation. At this time now, I'm about to read you some quotes, you're starting to get the trouble in Zurich.

Some of the priests are getting upset. The monks are particularly getting upset, and they're starting to protest about Zwingli's change. Conrad Grebel's there with Zwingli, and he says, I want to be a part of that preaching.

I want to be the one that can make a difference with bringing in the truth of the Gospel. And here's one of the letters that he wrote to Vaden to kind of get you an idea of this still young, zealous, but now believer. He says this, he said, I'd like to take those blasphemers myself.

If only I knew the Scripture better. Oh, my dear Vaden, if only you knew what a burning passion I feel to attack this kind of wolves to the point that I don't even hold my life dear. If I could get a chance to condemn these men publicly.

I wish everybody would pray for me that I would be able to get into this work, and I mean in earnest. I won't say much more about it, because a wagonload of words would not be adequate to express how strongly I feel. Sometime, I'll prove that I'm serious about this by doing something about it.

The entire church in St. Gallen, which belongs to Christ, goodbye, Vaden, evangelically. And that was his letter. Different, kind of regrettable, huh? And you can just see this young man who wants to preach, he's got a call on his life, but he feels the frustration, I've got to know the Bible more.

I've got to have more. Remember, he only had four years to live, and this is an interesting little letter that comes out. This will read you a quote now from Cup and the Cross on page 34.

Again, giving you some of the details of this time period. 34 on Cup and the Cross, the writer says, Several of Zwingli's young adherents, including Conrad Grebel, interrupted the monks' sermons when they taught unscriptural doctrine. Zwingli followed their example.

At least once, the resulting in a monk leaving the monastery and supporting Reformation teaching. We're going to hear tomorrow about the famous incident of George Blaurock and how he interrupted the church. It was kind of the thing to do.

People, including Zwingli, Conrad Grebel, would say, excuse me, you're not preaching the Bible properly. And that was something they did in that time period. And here's the quote, and I'm so glad they put it here in this book.

On Saturday, July 12th, a tall, erect, barefoot friar, Franz Lambert by name, came from Avagon and was given permission to preach four sermons. In the fourth sermon, he referred also to the intercession of Mary and the saints. He requested a debate with Master Ulrich Zwingli for before and during the last sermon, Zwingli had interrupted him publicly saying, brother, you are in error there.

You can imagine the scene. So he said, well, let's have a debate. Thus on Wednesday, July 17th, toward 10 o'clock in the bar room of the Canons, they began to debate until after lunch around 2 o'clock.

Master Ulrich brought along the Old Testament in the Greek and Latin and got the monks to the point of raising both hands. I wonder what that meant. I don't know.

Thankfully God, thanking God, raising both hands, thanking God and saying that he would in all his needs call only to God and abandon all coronas and rosaries and follow God. The next morning he rode to Basel to see Erasmus of Rotterdam also and from Basel to Wittenberg to Dr. Martin Luther who was an Augustinian monk. There he discarded his robes and married a wife.

And so just to give you an example there of what he was going through. So it's an incredible time that they were having. During this time, this is one you're only going to get here, how did it feel now? Now Grebel was still pretty poor even though he was part of this big rich family.

They didn't have a lot of money. They were a noble family. But it was a nice house.

It's still there. But now he's living there in the home with his mom whose dad's away all the time. And you know, sometimes the whole leave and cleave thing needs to be taught, you know what I'm saying.

And he seems to be having some struggles with his mother. And he begins to get burdened about the soul of his mother. So still living at home, Conrad grows very concerned about her.

And he writes this to Vadim. She's ungodly towards me. And to my wife, she's downright rabid.

I actually fear for her salvation unless she puts on Christ and becomes a new creature born again by the divine spirit. And now the time is drawing close when most people eat the body of Christ unworthily if they haven't forgiven the trespasses of other in a brotherly spirit. Oh Christ, send Vadim or someone like him, the teacher from your truth, to give up such ungodliness and to teach me patience.

Interesting insight into the home life of Conrad Grebel. Why do I bring that up? You know, in life, we get little irritants in our life. Bad things will happen.

Things will go wrong. And sometimes you wonder, God, why is this happening? Why am I going through this? It would seem that even things like this were working. God was using it, not causing it, but using it to shape young Conrad into a way.

And I appreciate his burden. Although, you know, I'm sure there was dynamics in the home there that went both ways. But nevertheless, I still see a burden for her soul and wants her to be born again by the spirit of God.

The Roman prelates around there are still complaining about the Reformation and Zurich, about the Reformation in Zurich. So the council decides to have a hearing. And here's an important thing that happens.

Zwingli decides, well, let's have a city council to decide what these Roman monks and all thing are gonna say. Well, he asked the council to do that. They're flattered that they're asked to do that.

But it set a precedent that gave us the Anabaptist. Because what is he doing? So we're gonna have a city council, and we'll decide what to do about these complaints of the Roman Catholic Church against our church. A very serious thing happened.

The city was asked. Now, the first debate, the authority of the state. On January 29, 1523, the debate begins.

Zwingli had penned 67 theses against Rome and challenged anyone to prove him wrong. In getting into points of theology, the bishop makes an interesting reply. The bishop's person there makes an interesting reply.

He said that the types of issues that were being decided like cannot be decided in a city council. The Roman, the guy sent from the Roman side was arguing that this type of thing cannot be handled by a city council. He said these are topics to be discussed by the church.

Zwingli scorns this position and he says to the audience that everyone should read the Bible either in Latin or German. It's interesting that a village minister cries out, a village preacher cries out, I don't have enough money to have a Bible. They didn't even have Bibles.

And just to give you an idea of the attitude was there. But Conrad leaves with Zwingli and, of course, proclaiming himself as winner. But a year later, did Conrad know that just a year later this same point that the man from Rome, who was there to argue, his points that that same idea, well, can the city decide points of Christian doctrine? Conrad and Barbara have their next son, Joshua, and they name him that because it means Yahweh is deliverance and the Greek form is Jesus.

And at this same time, Leo Judd, pastor of St. Peter, preaches a powerful sermon and starts to tear down images in the church at St. Peter's. So things are getting hotter and hotter in Zurich. The close relationship between Grebel and Zwingli was maintained until the second Zurich disputation in October 1523.

In this period, the views of the two men must have agreed in all essential respects. For instance, they debated on the idea of how the church can take tithes from the villages, on one of the burning issues of the hour. Grebel indicated agreement with Zwingli.

During this time, he also formed a friendship with the young man, student Felix Mons, a young Zurich student just returned from Paris who had also joined the ranks of the Zwinglians and had become in January 1527 the first Adam Baptist martyr. We'll read about that tomorrow. But then the second debate.

Beginning, however, in the October 1523 disputation, a cleavage arose between Zwingli and Grebel, which gradually grew wider during the ensuing months until in the fall of 1524 it led to a complete break. So now it kept going on. Well, are we going to make the changes or not? Are we going to make the reforms or are we not going to make the reforms? People like Leo Judd were saying, well, I'm going to start preaching this.

And people started ripping down images and stuff from the churches. And finally, the city council was saying, well, I don't know. I think we may be moving too fast.

So they said, OK, well, we're going to have another council and we'll discuss it. We'll have another city council to discuss it. 800 people showed up for this.

After that, iconoclasts was tearing down things off the wall, making it their own reform. The city council wanted to call a council to decide what changes they were going to make. And after proving the mass was wicked, Zwingli then goes on and proves very well that the mass was wicked.

He then said that he was going to leave it to the city council to decide what they were going to do about it. And he said, quote, I have it highlighted there in the notes, the city will discern how the mass should be properly observed. Now, what do you do about this? Now, what's so wrong about the mass? What's so wrong about it? The problem is, is their view, the Roman Catholic view, believe that when they were offering the mass, they were offering a sacrifice.

And that not only the sacrifice, but they believe in something, we'll talk more about it tomorrow or the next day, transubstantiation. And so when they hold that host up, they believe that not just a symbolic way, not just in a spiritual way like Zwingli did, but they believe that the host actually became Jesus. When you read these certain words that the mass was reading.

And so because of that, it has, and I'll read it more tomorrow, still into the catechism of the Catholic church today, it is actually okay when you see like people holding these monstrance that, you know, you've seen them in pictures of Rome and stuff, that you can actually worship this host, this piece of bread, because Jesus is completely present in that bread. Still to this day, you are allowed to actually worship the communion wafer. So Zwingli made this, how terrible this was.

And so of course these young zealous Bible students were thinking, yeah, it is terrible, but we'll let the city decide whether we're going to keep doing it or not. What do you mean? I mean, what do you do now? You just proved that this thing was totally wicked, and now you're going to say that? Look to your page 40 of the cup and the cross now. They have some good quotes here on the second disputation.

I give a quote from the chronicles of the, the reform chronicles there. Then arose Conrad Grebel and expressed the opinion that the priests should be given instructions while they were still together, how henceforth to proceed with the mass, for it would be futile if they did not begin to change the mass. Much has been said about the mass, but there would be no one who would be willing to stop this great abomination to God.

And that's when Zwingli said, the council will discern how the mass should henceforth be properly observed. And then it happened. Thereupon spoke Simon Stump, Master Ulrich, you have no authority to place the decision in the council's hand, for the decision is already made.

The spirit of God decides. If therefore the council were to discern and decide anything that is contrary to God's decision, I will ask Christ for the spirit and he, and we'll teach and act. I will ask Christ for his spirit and we'll teach and act against it.

Let me read that again. If therefore the council were to discern and decide anything that is contrary to God's decision, I will ask Christ for his spirit and we'll teach and act against it, replied Zwingli. That's right.

I shall also preach and act against it if they decide otherwise. I do not give the decision into their hand. Interestingly enough, Zwingli agreed to them.

Okay, you're right, you're right, you're right, you're right. Yeah. But he was so confident that the city council would agree with him.

Now what do you think of this? Was it wisdom? Was it okay for the city to make these kind of proclamations? Put yourselves in Zwingli's seat for a moment. What's he going to do? The Reformation's going a little bit crazy. He starts to hear about these things happening in Wittenberg and he starts no doubt to be hearing about some of the different revolts that were happening in Wittenberg and all those types of things.

Things are happening in excitement and now he's faced with this thing, well how do you reform an entire city? And in his day, and it's a very important point, in his day the church was the city, a geographic area, and that's the whole point of infant baptism. That's one of the points that they got to. The whole point of infant baptism is that the people of a Christian nation were the kingdom of God and the people of the Christian nation as a kingdom of God who then would, if you were baptized, you would be, excuse me, when you were born, then you would be baptized and put into that kingdom.

So they saw all these Christian nations, so to speak, as the Christian kingdom of God. So now though, how do you make reforms in that area? So what do you think? What do you do? What would have been the right thing to do for Zwingli to do? Was he trapped? Could it have been done? Could the only thing that had been done was the Anabaptist way? Or would there have been any other way to do it? How could you have reformed the entire town? Let's put ourselves in the shoes of Zwingli. What would you have done? All right.

You're graded for class participation. What would you have done? Is it possible? Can you reform a town? Right. Good question.

How would it have turned out if the council had decided in favor of them? Well, then suddenly, hey, we're doing this. And that's what happened, and that's what happened with Luther. He ended up with the German government on his side, and so it began to go out that way, and we saw some of the effects of it.

Anybody else? Mm-hmm. Yeah. I don't know if I would have seen it either.

Jacob's point was, you know, the whole idea that the city couldn't. They had so many different interests. They weren't just spiritual interests.

They were interests in economics, interests in different things, and they weren't looking at this from a spiritual perspective. But what do you do now with a doctrine like the Mass? You see, you had a liturgy, and in Zurich, everywhere, everybody, all your priests had to read the Mass when they offer communion, and it meant something. You know, the whole expression that we get with, in Latin, you ever heard the term hocus-pocus people use for magic, it's a term for magic.

Hocus-pocus, and they turn, take a rabbit out of the hat, okay? That actually, they believe, comes from what people would hear Latin words said over the host, because when they speak the words of institution over the wafer, they believe it truly become the body and the blood of Christ. And this is significant. I mean, it's still, I mean, in our culture, coming particularly from your place in life, it's still something, I mean, from here in Gray's and Mennonite areas and Anabaptist areas, you don't hardly see people that take this that seriously.

Maybe when we're here, Stephen Russell sometimes took people on one of the Sundays to a Latin mass service around here somewhere. He got us in there. So maybe if you're interested, we could check that out on some Sunday.

He did it as a class project. I had to write a paper and everything to it, but if you were interested, it's a surprising thing to see. I, myself, when I was in the Army, my first anniversary, my wife and I had a chance to go to Rome, and we visited the Vatican.

It was kind of interesting because when we were there, for \$199, you got to take this bus tour, and it took you all around and gave you meals and everything. But it was Christmas, and since we were in Rome and it was Christmas, we wanted to see the Colosseum. It was one of the biggest things I really wanted to see, but it was closed for Christmas Day.

So because of that, they were going to dump us off early at the Vatican, so I had a little more time to check out the Vatican when I was there. I was this young Baptist, young man, and there checking out the Vatican. It was interesting.

In my mind, when I'm reading some of these things, I'm seeing some of these images of how seriously they took that. For instance, I remember seeing a statue of Peter next to the high altar. On the statue of Peter, it was brass or bronze, and his foot was wore down from everybody kissing it and venerating it, the image itself.

Later, I thought, it would be a good place to put a little plaque that says, Get up, for I too am just a man. That's what Peter said. I looked under the high altar, and there is, under the high altar, a tomb under there, which they believe is Peter himself.

David believes it's quite possible it could be actually the bones of Peter. There's an upside-down cross under there. Sure enough, Peter was crucified upside-down.

But when you're there, the seriousness that they take over this thing, that's why it seems like you're arguing over the mass, couldn't you wait? But it means a lot. It has a lot of meaning. As a matter of fact, an

interesting thing, so we were there, Tonya and I were there.

I'm up front, and I'm looking around, and it gets later and later towards midnight, and more people start showing up to church at the Vatican and to the point of the thousands and to the tens of thousands, and there Tonya and I are sitting right up front. These are pretty good seats. And Pope John Paul comes out, and two archdeacons on either side of him, and he's doing this whole mass there in the Vatican on this midnight mass.

And here I am, this little Baptist guy. I had this red polo shirt on, and I had my camera, and I was like, this is great. And I'll never forget, the Pope with his two archdeacons that walked, and he offered the mass, and then all of a sudden, this archdeacon took the wafer that the Pope blessed, you know, with this all there, and he came over to me and handed me the host, just like that.

And I said, oh no, no, I don't want it. I'll never forget that dirty look. It was like, it was a look like, do you realize there's 10,000 people waiting in line here that would die to what you could have received? And I said, no, no.

And sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had partaken of that. But I had enough Baptists in me to say no, I don't want that. But it was interesting, and just to see the pomp and the ceremony and the seriousness that they took this issue.

Now, I think sometimes we can make our communion much not meaningful enough, but nevertheless, the degree of veneration that they offer to these things is wrong. And so that's the kind of thing that they were dealing with. Okay, either we are doing something incredibly mysterious and we're actually bringing in the very presence of Jesus Christ, not just spiritual presence, but the physical presence of Christ into our midst, or we're not.

And if we're pretending like we're doing that in every church all around Zurich, and then this is a problem, even over the infant baptism, they had all these little ceremonies. They complained about putting on salt and all the different things that they did and all the little rituals they did. All those things were still going on, while this zealous group of Anabaptists were beginning to say, ah, how can you just keep doing this? But Zwingli kept saying, you're going too fast.

You guys are radical. You need to slow down. Maybe they were.

They were young guys. I don't know. What would you have done? Could you have gone to church the next Sunday after Zwingli just proved that the whole town, this is not what we've said it is.

As a matter of fact, it's wicked. It's wrong. Let's let the city decide.

Go to church tomorrow and take your time. What do you do? That's the kind of crisis they were dealing with. That's the kind of thing they were dealing with, and Zwingli just said, hey, let's take it easy.

He said this later on. He said, people are weak. You can't just take a person and expect them to change overnight.

You've got to bring people along in the Christian faith. You've got to show them this, teach them that. Young radicals were like, no, you get born again.

You live for Christ, and it should be something that changes in you, and Zwingli differed with them on those points. Okay, what do you have to say about that? He said it sounds... Yeah, yeah. We use that as an excuse.

He said that sounds familiar. So in other words, sometimes, as Paul says, you still need teachers when many of you should be teachers yourself. We can use this as an excuse, and Zwingli was using this for an excuse.

Well, people can't handle it, and we use that as an excuse. Well, I don't understand the scriptures, like that first quote that I gave day one. I don't know what to do about it, and you're right.

It is familiar, and it's a debate, and it's an issue that we still come into today. So raising this crisis up was this fundamental point that they were given, and that whole famous quote from Simon Stump, the council, the city council, has no authority to decide on church matters, and it was a significant time in their history there, in their history. Absolutely, yeah.

Zwingli had an idea. He was watching Luther. He was getting excited with what Luther was doing, and this is a whole year after that thing happened in Wittenberg, and so Zwingli wanted to get in on this.

I mean, they kind of had the idea, this is changing the world, and the Bible is out. We're going to start this seminary here, and Luther was a hero of his, and they really thought that they were going to make changes, and if these young radicals mess this up, we're going to be in trouble, and they're going to end up ruining this for me. Here's a letter to give you some of the frustrations of these people in this letter here.

So Conrad Grebel, also when he gets back and thinks about what's happening in here, grows very frustrated with it as well. When the council's mandate had been drawn up even before it can be issued, Conrad is already writing a biting letter to Vadian. So they go back, and all the young radicals are just kind of thinking.

Hmm. And he said, quote, in this letter, the cause of the gospel is in a very bad way here. It all started to go this way at the assembly where you were a presiding officer when the word of God was thrown down and trampled on by the ones who should have been its proclaimers, learned as they are.

Now they have a commission of eight, including Zwingli, and I don't know what other priestly monsters. Instead of obeying the divine teaching against saying mass, they have shrewdly come up with a compromise. But it's a devilish one.

It means that the mass is going to have to be said. Here is the saying you can quote. Whoever thinks or believes or says that Zwingli acts like a true Christian pastor, thinks and believes and speaks wickedly.

I stand by that. And obviously, these young radicals felt a break in what was happening here, a break in what was happening. And something happened between these two radicals.

Just a few more minutes, and then we'll build a suspense more in coming into tomorrow of what happens between these two. The young Bible students didn't like the answer. They protested, and then surprisingly, as we saw, Zwingli even agrees with them at first.

But the council, so the next day it was expected the council would come back with their word. So imagine the scene. Yes, yes, Simon, you're right.

The council, of course, would have to say what the word of God says, but they've all heard it now, haven't you? And you can imagine what Zwingli was thinking. Well, they're going to agree with me. It was a gamble.

You're right, Simon, yes. But the next day, the council decided. And what did they decide? Wait.

The council did not go with Zwingli's reform, and Zwingli compromised. He didn't take what he told Simon. Zwingli's feeling the tension with the young radicals.

He began to publish papers against them. You can see Conrad Grebel now with his letter to Weyden, and now Zwingli now was starting to draw a line with these radicals and say, you're scaring me. I'm going to start writing things against you.

And however, on the other side, I'm sorry, sorry. Oh, we're almost done. Zwingli started to feel that the reform was being stopped.

The city council, so he proclaimed that the change would be made by Christmas of 1523, or he said this. All right. A change would be made in this town by 1523, or I stand condemned as lying by the word of God.

I'll say it. There it is. I'll guarantee you this.

There will be change in Zurich by 1523, or I stand condemned as lying by the word of God. And we'll come tomorrow and hear if the change happened by Christmas of 1523.

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