

6. MARTIN LUTHER AND THE BREAK WITH ROME

Romans 1:16-17, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

1. LUTHER'S PROBLEM WITH SALVATION (LUKE 10:25)

Born 10 November 1483 in Eisleben, Germany

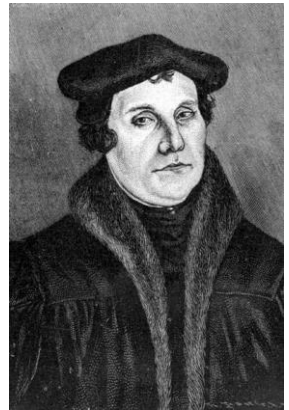
1505 brush with death: "Save me St Anne!"

Ordained priest, doctor of theology, lecturer at Wittenberg

Deep turmoil:

- Stuck in the cycle of sin and penance

- The *Via Moderna* (Gabriel Biel, d.1495)
= God demands 100%... but if we do our best out of our own "natural goodness" then God will accept us



2. LUTHER'S BREAKTHROUGH TO SALVATION

(a) Converted some time in 1510s, through studies in Psalms and Romans

"I had certainly wanted to understand Paul in his letter to the Romans. But what prevented me from doing so was... that one phrase in the first chapter: "the righteousness of God is revealed in it" (1:17). For I hated that phrase, "the righteousness of God", which I had been taught to understand as the righteousness by which God is righteous, and punishes unrighteous sinners. Although I lived a blameless life as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner with an uneasy conscience before God. I also could not believe that I had pleased him with my works. Far from loving that righteous God who punished sinners, I actually hated him..."

"I was in desperation to know what Paul meant in this passage. At last, as I meditated day and night on these words... I began to understand that 'righteousness of God' as that by which the righteous person lives by the gift of God; [that] by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'the righteous person lives by faith'. This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again... From that moment, I saw the whole face of Scripture in a new light... This passage in Paul became to me the very gate of paradise."
(Luther, Autobiographical Fragment)

(b) 6 characteristics of saving righteousness

- Alien:
- Imputed:.
- Undeserved:
- Personal:.
- Side by side with sin: *simul justus et peccator, semper justus et peccator*
- In hope, not daily reality:

(c) How is this just? Because of the union we enjoy with our heavenly bridegroom!

The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph. 5:31--32]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage -- indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage -- it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers? (Luther, The Freedom of the Christian)

(d) Consequences of justification by faith?

- perfect peace. "This passage in Paul became for me the very gate of paradise."
- humility. "We are all beggars now."

3. LUTHER AND THE BREAK WITH ROME

(a) 31 October 1517 = 95 Theses Against Indulgences

27. *There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of the purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.*

36. *Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys plenary remission from penalty and guilt, and this is given him without letters of indulgence.*

37. *Any true Christian whatsoever, living or dead, participates in all the benefits of Christ and the Church; and this participation is granted to him by God without letters of indulgence.*

48. *Christians should be taught that, in granting indulgences, the pope has more need, and more desire, for devout prayer on his own behalf than for ready money.*

50. *Christians should be taught that, if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence-preachers, he would rather the church of St. Peter were reduced to ashes than be built with the skin, flesh, and bones of the sheep.*

(b) Years of conflict and opposition:

- Dominicans... examined by Cajetan at Augsburg... protected by Elector Frederick of Saxony... 1520 papal bull *Exsurge Domine*...
- Three Treatises of 1520: *Address to the German Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On The Freedom of The Christian*.
- Excommunicated. Tried at the Diet of Worms in April 1521
- Kidnapped to the Wartburg Castle as “Junker Jorg”! Produces German New Testament... but greatly troubled

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.”

- Returned secretly to Wittenberg
- 1525 marries Catherine Von Bora

Before I married no one made up my bed for a whole year. The straw was rotting from my sweat. I wore myself out with work during the day, so that I fell into bed oblivious of everything... [Now] One wakes up in the morning and finds a pair of pigtails on the pillow which were not there before.”

- Luther the tender father:
- Dies 18 February 1546. Buried in the Castle Church at Wittenberg

*Here do I, Lena, Luther’s daughter rest,
Sleep in my little bed with all the blessed.
In sin and trespass was I born;
For ever would I be forlorn,
But yet I live, and all is good –
Christ did save me with his blood.*

4. LUTHER’S DOCTRINES AND CHARACTER: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

(a) Praise God!

- Justification by faith
- Augustinian doctrine of sin (*The Bondage of the Will*)
- Sola Scriptura
- Law and Gospel?
- Education
- Work and vocation
- Family life, marriage and sex

(b) But...

? Lord's Supper: consubstantiation

? An angry temperament: e.g. argument with Zwingli at the Colloquy of Marburg

? Relationship between church and state: persecution of enemies

? Anti-semitism

5. The Spread of Lutheranism

(a) In the mid 1500s

Monks leave their orders... and marry

The Gospel is preached!

German language... no vestments... communion in both kinds... congregational hymns... local bishops... radicals going too far

The cities were key: of 65 cities in the Empire 51 became Protestant at some stage, and around half remained so

(b) Luther's influence beyond his lifetime

The "Lutheran Church": 1580 Book of Concord... expansion into Scandinavia (late 1500s)... and into USA (early 1700s)... later division into evangelical and liberal.

Luther's influence felt in other branches of Protestantism.

Lutheranism increasingly eclipsed by the "Reformed Churches"

