**MARTIN LUTHER**

**Part Two**

**LAST WEEK:**

* **CATHOLIC SON (1483-1506)**
* **BRILLIANT STUDENT (1498-1505)**
* **AUGUSTINIAN MONK (1505-1507)**
* **ORDAINED PRIEST (1507-1510)**
* **UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR (1511-1546)**
* **REGENERATED BELIEVER (1519)**

**BOLD DEBATER (1519)** Given the problems created by Luther’s teaching, Rome calls for public debate – known as Leipzig Debate, a 20-day debate vs. Johann Eck from 6/27 to 7/16, 1519. Luther demonstrated a command of Scripture, knowledge of Church history, the Church Fathers, and the Roman Catholic Church.

During the debate, Luther stated that Rome’s teaching of the infallible authority of the pope was of recent origin, and that it contradicted Scripture, the Council of Nicaea, and church history. Luther stated: “I assert that a Council [drafting a Doctrinal Statement] has sometimes erred & may sometimes err. Nor has a Council authority to establish new Articles of Faith. [If not in Word, we will not believe it.] A council cannot make divine right out of that which by nature is not divine right. Councils have contradicted each other…. A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a Pope or Councils. Neither the Church nor the Pope can establish Articles of Faith. These must come from Scripture. For the sake of Scripture, we should reject Pope and Council. [John Hus had said this before and died a martyr’s death in 1415.]

**POLEMIC AUTHOR (1520)** 3 Treatises: 1) *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation:* He sets forth priesthood of all believers w/access to Father’s throne.2) *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,* attacking the entire sacramental system of the Catholic Church & openly denying the sacrificial efficacy of the Mass. He insisted that both the bread and wine should not be given exclusively to the priests, but to the laity. 3) *Freedom of the Christian Man*, teaching the foundational doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Luther was issued a Papal Bull, an official decree threatening him w/excommunication from Catholic church within 60 days if he did not repent. The bull began: “Arise, O Lord, & judge Thy cause. A wild boar has invaded Thy vineyard.” This Bull, 41 of Luther’s beliefs were judged as: heretical, or scandalous, or false, or offensive to pious ears, or seductive of simple minds, or repugnant to Catholic truth.

Without flinching, Luther chided: “This bull condemns Christ Himself.” In dramatic fashion, Luther took the Bull and, in front of his students, publicly burned it (June 15, 1520). The historian Thomas Lindsay writes:
“It is scarcely possible for us in the twentieth century, to imagine the thrill that went through Germany, and indeed through all Europe, when the news spread that a poor monk had burnt the Pope’s Bull.”

**DEFIANT STALWART (1521)** Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms. He assumed this was a public debate & had no idea it was a heresy trial against him. Before the political and ecclesiastical powers of the day, including Charles V, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Archbishop of Trier rebuked Luther for daring to stand in opposition to the beliefs of the Church:“Prosecutor of the trial who was also named Eck stated: “Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the Pope and the Emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate.”

Two questions of Luther were asked by Eck: 1) Luther, are these your books? 2) Will you repent? Luther understood the enormity of the moment, and that his neck was on the line. Luther asked for the night to give his answer. The next day, April 18, 1521, he addressed the Council and issued his now-famous declaration: “Yes these are my books and I cannot repent. 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 to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do other. Here I stand. God help me. Amen.”

This was shot heard around the world that set fire to Protestant reformation thru Europe & to U.S. Eck gave Luther 21 days to set his affairs in order. Because he had now been condemned as a heretic by the Church. He leaves Worms and heads back to Wittenberg, and on the way he is kidnapped. A bag is put over his head. It was his friends who knew if he returned to Wittenberg, as such a marked man, he would die within days. Take him to the Wartburg Castle, in seclusion, hiding. Luther works hard during this stay.

**BIBLE TRANSLATOR (1521-1522)** Never one to sit idly and realizing the central importance of the Scripture, Luther spent the time profitably by translating Erasmus’ Greek New Testament, recently collected in 1516, into the German language (1521-1522). He states, “I shall remain here in seclusion till Easter, and write postils, and translate the New Testament into German which so many people are anxious to have …. Would to God that every town had its interpreter, and that this book could be had in every language and dwell in the hearts and hands of all. Once people have the Word in their hands w/the redeeming gospel there would be no turning back. Called “September Bible” cuz he finished it on September 21, 1522. From Greek into German. People now could purchase on the black market the Bible and bring them into their homes.

As this Protestant movement expanded, Luther was asked to explain how such a powerful, history-altering work had come about. Luther responded: “I simply taught, preached, wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And when, while I slept…. the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a Prince or Emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing. The Word did it all.”

This is the genius of the Protestant Reformation, Sola Scriptura. It is the Scripture as it is read, taught, preached, as it is believed, and as it is lived – a recovery of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

**EXPOSITORY PREACHER:** 7000 sermons. 200 sermons per yr. Average of 4 a week. Or 1 sermon every other day. In his relentless drive as a preacher, Luther’s principal commitment to the pulpit is clearly seen.

On most Sundays, he preached twice and, by his own admission, “often I preached 4 sermons on 1 day.”

Leading writer of time, Erasmus, loved literature and the Bible was his favorite book, but hated sovereign grace. On September 1, 1524, Erasmus published a polemic against Luther entitled *Diatribe on the Freedom of the Will*. It was an attack on Luther’s position on the bondage of the human will, which denied man’s free will. Luther does not respond. Then he writes his magnum opus, The Bondage of The Will.

**REFORMED THEOLOGIAN (1524)**

Luther thanked Erasmus for going to “the root of the controversy,” instead of troubling him as others had done “about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and other fooleries.” But Luther described Erasmus’ arguments as “rotten theology and dung on a plate”. He takes gospel of John, Romans, Galatians & Hebrews to refute Erasmus. Unleashes the forces of Scripture to show the bankruptcy of teaching that man has a free will when he is blind, dead, and under the dominion of sin. A dead man has no free will. He is unresponsive to the things of God. God must initiate salvation and enable the sinner to believe upon Christ through the gift of faith – Christ is the author and perfecter of faith.

He writes to Erasmus, “I give you hearty praise and commendation on this further account—that you alone, in contrast with all others, have attacked the real thing, that is, the essential issue. No man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone. For as long as he is persuaded that he himself can do even the least thing toward his salvation, he retains some self-confidence and does not altogether despair of himself, and therefore he is not humbled before God, but presumes that there is—or at least hopes or desires that there may be— some place, some time, and some work for him, by which he may at length attain to salvation. But when a man has no doubt that everything depends on the will of God, then he completely despairs of himself and chooses nothing for himself but waits for God to work; then he has come close to grace, and can be saved.

**DEVOTED HUSBAND (1525)** Married a Catholic nun.

**HYMN WRITER (1527)** Luther changed the worship services where sermons were absent. This marked by the centrality of the preaching of God, the simplicity of the order, and the singing of theology.

At outgrowth of the black plague, Luther’s home was turned into a hospital. Own 2 year old son came down with the plague. In a letter to Philip Melanchthon, he wrote: “I spent more than a week in death and in hell. My entire body was in pain, and I still tremble. Completely abandoned by Christ, I labored under the vacillations and storms of desperation and blasphemy against God. But through the prayers of the saints God began to have mercy on me and pulled my soul from the inferno below.” In this soul-crushing experience, he wrote his most famous hymn, a work based on Psalm 46. We know this soul-strengthening song as: *A Mighty Fortress* based on Psalm 46 – “A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our Helper He amid the flood, Of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe. His craft and pow’r are great, And, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.”

**PROTESTANT LEADER (1528-1529)** Luther wrote the *Small Catechism,* a concise doctrinal statement for the laity due to “the deplorable, miserable condition: of the German people doctrinally (1529). This was followed by the *Large Catechism* for the clergy. “The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! Many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach…. Nevertheless, all maintain they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the [common] holy Sacraments. Yet they….cannot….recite the Lord’s Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments: they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts.”

**FAITHFUL WARRIOR (1546)** In Luther’s final sermon, the great Reformer said: “In times past we would have run to the ends of the world if we had known of a place where we could have heard God speak. But now that we hear this every day in sermons….if you do not want God to speak to you every day at your home in your house and in your parish church, then be wise and look for something else: in Trier is our Lord God’s coat, in Aachen are Joseph’s pants and our blessed Lady’s chemise [milk]; go there and squander your money, buy indulgence and the pope’s secondhand junk; these are valuable things! You have to go far for these things and spend a lot of money; leave house and home standing idle! But aren’t we stupid and crazy, yes, blinded and possessed by the devil?....But we should listen to God’s Word, which tells us that He is our schoolmaster, and have nothing to do w/Joseph’s pants or the pope’s juggling tricks.”

Before Luther died, he wrote his last will and testament, which began with the words: “I am well known in heaven, on earth, and in hell itself.” In his last moments, Luther was asked by his friend Justus Jonas, “Do you want to die standing firm on Christ and the doctrine you have taught?” The answer was “Yes. We are beggars. This is true.”

His wife Kathryn wrote: “For who would not be sad and afflicted at the loss of such a precious man as my dear lord was. He did great things not just for a city or a single land, but for the whole world.”

**ENDURING FIGURE**:

**CLASS DISCUSSION:**

1. What was Luther’s explanation for the reformation?
2. How can we explain such boldness and willingness to risk one’s own life as demonstrated in Luther’s life?
3. What is the Biblical foundation for Luther’s response at his heresy trial that the simple layman is to be believed above a Pope?
4. What does Pastor Steve mean when he says that when Luther defended himself against Rome a shot was heard around the Lord?
5. God powerfully intervened in Europe beginning with one man, Martin Luther? Do we need His intervention today? In the Church? In our own country? How should we seek this intervention?