

**“Here I Stand” - Romans 1:8-17**  
**Pastor Burt Garwood – October 29, 2017**

Martin Luther became a monk to make peace with God. In submission to the authority of the church, he joined the Augustinian order of monks.

- The church at that time in history, had forgotten the mercies of God. It taught that man was so helplessly engulfed in sin that he should live in fear of a furious God. Even Jesus was viewed as one bringing judgment and damnation rather than the joy and assurance of forgiveness of sins and salvation.
- Strict obedience to monastic practices and endless acts of repentance to God the angry judge, failed to bring peace to Martin Luther’s troubled soul. Martin would beat his body, not eat for days, and sleep out in the cold, to which another monk said, “Brother Martin, you can’t help your soul by punishing your body.”
- Martin at one point said, “I’ve tried thinking of God as a loving father. But can find only an angry judge.” Luther found that he could not love God, and he saw this as his unpardonable sin.

Luther was sent to Rome and was told to kiss two crosses on the outside of the caskets that supposedly contained the bones of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The reward for kissing the crosses was that he would get something like 14,000 years less time in purgatory, and be that much closer to heaven. He was told to find the staircase that was supposedly the same one Pontius Pilate tried Jesus on. And then he was supposed to kneel and pray on each step and would get more years of pardon. But in all this, there was never a guarantee that Luther could ever do enough to gain God’s pardon and receive salvation.

Then one day, studying in his office, Luther discovered Romans 1:17. What does this mean?

- We are forgiven and can cling to the sure and certain promise of salvation from sin, satan and separation from God simply by having faith in Jesus.
- This verse was the key to transforming Luther’s view of God from angry judge to loving Father, and transforming his view of man needing to work for salvation, to simply resting in the grace of his loving heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ. READ also: Ephesians 2:8-9.
- It was an aha moment for Luther where he realized that the church at that time had been putting all the burden on people to do as many good works as they could in hopes that they could gain God’s pardon for sin. And that they had to purchase something called an indulgence that helped buy their soul out of purgatory and move their soul toward heaven. But in reality, the selling of indulgences was a money-making scheme of the church.

We only need Jesus Christ. The Lutheran Church stands on these terms:

- “Sola Fide” – We live by faith alone in Jesus Christ.
- “Sola Scriptura” – The Bible alone is our authority.
- “Sola Gratia” – Grace alone from God is what saves us.

What are we celebrating today? The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

- We’re celebrating the day that Martin Luther, a priest and professor in the Catholic church, nailed a document entitled “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences”, which we’ve come to affectionately refer to simply as “The 95 Theses”, to the front door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. These were a list of 95 items Luther wanted to debate.
- It happened on October 31, 1517. And it sparked the beginning of the protestant reformation...which was the break away from the Catholic church.

The Catholic church, at that time, had become corrupt with its selling of indulgences to forgive sins and promising people salvation, along with the excessive power of the Pope as the only one who could interpret scripture amongst other things.

- At this point, Luther had no intention of leaving the Catholic church. He simply wanted to point out that in his search through the Bible, he could not find anything that backed up the selling of indulgences to pay for one’s sins and gain salvation.

Luther was concerned that the forgiveness of sins and salvation that Jesus gives us through his death on the cross and rising from the dead had been replaced with the selling of indulgences. Along with that came the concern that people thought they could earn their way to heaven with enough good works.

- This diminishes the work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. It has to be 100% what Jesus has done for us. It can’t be a combination of our good works or the buying of indulgences.
- Because Jesus is God, his death and resurrection accomplishes everything. Jesus doesn’t need our help in our saving us.

The short story is that after numerous debates with Catholic leaders and theologians, Luther was subpoenaed to appear in court, where he was given opportunity to withdraw his statements, his writings and his teachings. He didn’t. Here is the transcript of his final words that was written down that night on April 18, 1521:

- *“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures and by clear reason (for I do not trust in the pope or councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted. 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. May God help me. Amen.”*
- But then come the words that are even more famous, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.” Luther spoke those words in German as the crowded room erupted, many in cheers and others in jeers. These words of Luther are the rally cry for the protestant reformation. They appeared on wood carvings of the event almost immediately afterward, some of them have been preserved for us to this day.

What does this mean for you? It means that Jesus is calling you to stand up for him.

- Stand for Scripture alone – that the Bible is our authority and we live according to it.
- Stand for faith alone – that only by faith in Jesus do we receive forgiveness of sins and salvation, not by our own works.
- Stand for grace alone – that only the grace of God through faith in Jesus saves us.
- In a culture that is telling you to do whatever you want, Martin Luther points you back to the Bible, back to Jesus and back to your loving heavenly Father.
- That is your moral absolute. This is what we stand for. This is what we defend.
- Just as popes and councils can err, as Luther pointed out 500 years ago, so do the opinions of people who are not grounded and founded in the very words of God in the Bible.
- So here we stand, lovingly holding up God and his Word and giving grace to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Romans 1:17).