

## ***“Why the Reformation?”***

### **A Sermon for the Family of God**

Romans 1:16-17

Pastor Jeff Stivason

November 10, 2017

**Jeff:** Father in heaven, we are thankful for the day. And we're thankful most of all for the redemption that we have in the Lord Jesus. Father, You are triune—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we know that redemption came from You, the triune God. There was no arm twisting on the part of the Son in order to get You to redeem us. You sent the Son, covenanted with Him, that we might have life through Him. And by the application of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives we are able to see this work and to delight in it. Father, thank You so much for it. We pray that we would grow in the knowledge of it. We pray that we would grow in the experience of it. And we ask that we would grow with one another and encourage one another.

Father, as we gather together today, we think about Bruce. And we are encouraged by what we've heard. We pray that that would continue. We pray for his continued recovery, his continued health. And Father, we just pray and ask that you would strengthen him, such that he feels young again and able to move around and even come back. And Father, we pray that for him. We ask it in Your name.

Father, we are also thankful for Sarah Mangus, that she's home. Father, thank You so much that You are a prayer answering God. And we see it in Bruce's life. We see it in Sarah's life. Father, make it so in Matt's life, as he continues to live without strokes. And Father, we're thankful for the year anniversary that he just observed.

Father, we pray that Your hand would be upon Frank and give him that same experience. We pray, Father, that you would take away the pain. But we also pray that You'll use means to do it. If that means a replacement surgery, we pray that You'll strengthen his heart and his mind and prepare him for that, and go before him in it. Father, we just ask that You would do these things for Christ's sake and the good of these folks and for the well-being of those who depend upon them and love them, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Okay. I just want to start by telling you that I have to go to presbytery today right afterward, so I've got to leave here fairly quickly and pick up about three other guys. We're heading about an hour-and-a-half north. So you know, I don't know if you've ever been to presbytery, but it's all fun and games. *(Laughter)* And I won't be here next week. I'll be at an academic conference delivering a paper. And Sig will have the arrangements.

**Sig:** Oh, we have a special guest lined up, a very special guest. We'll let you know about it in our weekly email.

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You can consult Sig. So I'll see you in two weeks, the day after Thanksgiving.

**Sig:** Thank you. We are meeting the day after Thanksgiving. Don't forget that Friday.

**Jeff:** I didn't designate that. I just want you to know. *(Laughter)* I'm just following him. *(Laughter)*

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Okay. Why the Reformation? Well let’s think about that for a little bit. I want to think about it under three points. And I’ll explain a little bit as to why I’m doing it this way. But the points are that I want to look at *the medieval church*. I want to look at the medieval church of *Martin Luther*. I want to look at *the medieval church divided*, which is the Reformation.

I want to look at these three. We’re probably going to spend more time on this one.

**Transcriber’s Note:** The medieval church.

**Jeff:** This one’s going to be a little bit more historical, about Martin Luther. But I want you to understand that there’s some theological fallout from this in *the church divided*. And that’s our practical point.

How is it that you sum up 1500 years of the church in a matter of minutes? You can’t do that. So how are we going to do that? Well what I’m going to do is look at *controversies, reformers and criticisms*. And I’m going to look at that far too briefly to really mean anything to you guys. But hopefully what I’m going to do is tie some of the things that I’m going to talk about with why the church needed reformed. So I’m not just picking these willy-nilly. But it’s just a fraud. You need to know that I could have picked from any number of controversies, reformers and criticisms. So I’m just saying that up front.

Well I want you to think about the medieval church. And here’s the important thing that I think you need to understand when we think about the Reformation. How many of you have said, how many of you have heard someone say something like this? Well, you know that when Martin Luther broke off from the Roman Catholic Church. Have you ever heard someone say that? Or have you ever said that. When Martin Luther broke off from the Roman Catholic Church.

Well I want you to know that that is a way of conceptualizing the Reformation that I think is historically inaccurate. And the reason I say that is because up until the Reformation there was one monolithic church, at least in some sense. Now that doesn’t mean that there weren’t divisions. That doesn’t mean that there weren’t problems within the church. You like that? (*Laughter*) That was foul!

That doesn’t mean there weren’t problems along the way. But the church in this one stream, this one river, had a way of housing all kinds of schisms, all kinds of different theologies, and all kinds of different reform movements, all within that one river. And that’s why I describe what happened before the Reformation as *the medieval church*. Okay?

**Participant:** What is the date for the medieval church?

**Jeff:** Well I’m going to say that the medieval church is after Augustine—the fifth century—on up through I would say the 1400s when the Renaissance begins. So a long time, a long period of the church.

But when I’m talking about the medieval church, I’m just talking about it for the sake of the Reformation. When I say the one church, I really mean essentially from Pentecost on up through the Reformation, one monolithic church. There weren’t denominations. There were schisms and there were factions. But they were all within that church.

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Now you definitely had those groups that were put out of the church. There were groups where even the broad church said that you can't be a part of us, okay? But all in all, you had that kind of a view.

**Participant:** You mean the West though, because the East split off.

**Jeff:** Well, not until 1054, right?

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** So even then, in 1054, before the 13- or 1400s, there's the—But I don't pay any attention to the Eastern church. (*Laughter*) I mean, that's not my—As Western Christians, we have a tendency to think of Protestant and Roman Catholic, right? I just don't think in terms of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. I just don't. That's a problem with me, and you'll have to—

**Participant:** But the Reformers did.

**Jeff:** The Reformers did.

**Participant:** They definitely did.

**Jeff:** The Reformers definitely did, that's right. You can already see how complex this is. (*Laughter*)

All right. So the one thing I want to say to you about this long stream of the church is that there was no golden age in it. I mean I want you to think about it like this. If they weren't battling for their very lives, like Justin Martyr in the early- or mid-100s—160—I mean, he was writing to the Emperor, saying, look. We're the best of all citizens. You might want to think about not killing us, right? I mean if that wasn't happening, what you had happening was that you had Constantine. Before Constantine declares that Christianity is okay because he thinks that might be the best way to build up his kingdom, you had persecution. But once he declares, “Hey, Christianity is okay” in the 300s, “and I want to build a kingdom on this,” then what? What begins to happen? What begins to happen is that you have political infiltration into the church.

So you always have something. There's no golden age. There are good times, there are bad times, and so on.

So you have Justin Martyr, (100-165.) You have a guy by the name of Tertullian. This guy is an interesting guy. In the early church this guy begins to have some real insights into the Trinity. But you know, he spent some time in a heretical sect for a while, a heretical sect that the church deemed to be outside of the body.

*Monarchianism.* There were three types of monarchianism, and this all in the first 300 years. The Monarchians were a people who were *modalists*. They were people who believed that God was in the Old Testament in heaven. And then in the Gospels the God who was in heaven came down and became Jesus. And so when Jesus was praying to the Father, He was really praying to no one. And then when He ascends and the Holy Spirit comes back at Pentecost, it's just the Holy Spirit. There's no Son and there's no Father.

And this was called by various names. *Patripatianism*. In other words, the Father who was in heaven in the Old Testament becomes the Son. And so the Father suffers on the cross and dies, that sort of thing. These kinds of heresies were growing up in the church.

And then there was Athanasius *contra mundum*.

**Transcriber's Note:** Athanasius against the world.

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**Jeff:** Athanasius is exiled a number of times. Why? Because he stands against the Arians. This is anachronistic. But the Arians were sort of like the Jehovah’s Witnesses of today. They denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. And so he stood against them. There was lots of Arianism in the third and fourth centuries, and it was very problematic.

So there was no pure, good time in the early church. And there will be no great good time in the medieval church. And there’s no good golden time now, you know? It’s good and bad, one stream of good and bad.

The four major ecumenical councils were a bright spot—The Nicene Council, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon. You don’t have to read those. But I just throw those up to say that there were major councils dealing with Christological issues that were really good things.

But why were those councils held? Because people were denying things about Jesus Christ, right? They would say, “Well, Christ is this.” And then the council would get together and say, “No, I don’t think so. We need to think about that Biblically. Let’s think about who Christ is,” and so on.

There it is right there.

**Transcriber’s Note:** A picture.

**Jeff:** I introduce this because Big Brother is the Roman church. The Roman church in the second century decides to pull up its pants and say, “Now I just want to say this to everybody. Everybody is going to observe Easter on the day that I say.” Okay? *(Laughter)* No, really. And so everybody was like “I don’t think we’re going to do that.” And some people were like “Yeah, we ought to do that.” And the bottom line is that what emerges from that is that Rome is called “*the first among equals.*”

So it’s in the second century that you begin to see Rome sort of step forward as the most prominent church. But by the time you get to 1054, Rome is really asserting herself. And the East says, “You know what? We’re not going to have that.” And so what happens is that both churches excommunicate each other, and there’s a great schism. 1054 is the break between the East and the West. And so that monolithic stream does have a divide in it early on. But I don’t have a tendency to think that way. But I should because that’s important.

But here you begin to see what? One of the issues you begin to see is that Rome emerges as the primary bishop, as the primary church, as early as this.

How about the Lord’s Supper? Maybe you do or you don’t understand that the Lord’s Supper in the Roman Catholic Church is thought to be the miracle of the Mass. And so when the priest pronounces “This is My body” over the elements, then the elements become the body and the blood of Christ.

Now the miracle is that the *accidens*—what tastes like bread and feels like bread and looks like bread—all remain the same. But the miracle is that underneath it all, this really is the flesh and the blood of Christ.

Now back in the ninth century there were two guys, Radbertus and Ratramnus. They were not twins. *(Laughter)* Radbertus and Ratramnus were two guys who faced off with one another about the nature of the Lord’s Supper.

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Radbertus said that there is a real presence in the Lord’s Supper, not like a real spiritual presence, but a real presence in the Lord’s Supper. And Ratramnus said, no, no, no. It’s more of a symbolic presence in the Lord’s Supper.

And so all the way back in the ninth century you have these fights about what is the nature of the Lord’s Supper. And one of the things that you need to understand is that this kind of thing will find expression in 1215 at the Lateran Council, when the medieval church will say that it’s transubstantiation, or it’s the elements becoming the body and the blood of Christ that is the true way of understanding this.

And yet remember that one stream—and there were even people in that stream who said, “We don’t buy into that.” But the church was beginning to say, no, no, no. This is the way we ought to understand it.

There was a guy by the name of Gottschalk in the ninth century. Gottschalk was an Augustinian monk. And this Augustinian monk started to read Augustine’s works, and started to say, “Hey! There’s this thing called predestination in the Scriptures.” And Augustine talks about it. And that means that there is an elect group that Christ died for. And at the Synod of Mince in 848, they condemned his teaching. They condemned Augustinianism that would find expression in Lutheran theology, because Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk.

And so prior to the Reformation you had issues like the papacy beginning to emerge. You had issues of the nature of the Lord’s Supper, talking about what it is and what it means and what it does to us. And you had talk about predestination and election. And, if I can again take something from a later time and bring it earlier, you had talk about the doctrines of grace.

And then what you had in the early church was that you had *reform movements*. New people, this is what Sig was telling us last time. There were a number of reform movements within the church. And this is just one of them, this Cluniac Reform in 910. And I know what you’re thinking. That’s not Clooney. (*Laughter*)

**Participant:** George Clooney.

**Second Participant:** Rosemary Clooney.

**Jeff:** You know why George Clooney could never reform anything, don’t you? He couldn’t reform Bat Man. (*Groans and laughter*) He’s certainly not going to be able to reform the church. (*Laughter*) You don’t know what I’m talking about, do you, Sig? (*Laughter*) It went right over him. (*Laughter*)

**Sig:** I’m of the Star Wars generation. I never heard of that guy. (*Laughter*)

**Participant:** But Jeff, when you look at the reforms from then, aren’t those the same fights that we’re having today?

**Jeff:** Well, yes and no. Yes, the moral nature of man doesn’t change. But the way they handled it was oftentimes through the monastic movement. What would begin to happen was that the church would say, “We need to reform the church. And how we need to do it is that we need to get that segment of the church that really can obey Christ’s word. And we need to have them obey it.” And so you’d have a resurgence of the monastics, like the Cluniac movement, where no one talked. Why do you think it went so well? Nobody talked to each other. You had to be silent. You had to serve the poor. You had to really

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give your life to moral reform, not just in the monastery but also outside the monastery. You had to influence the culture around you.

Here’s the problem, though. The problem is that a lot of times these monastic reforms were like rock stars. And so one guy would sort of emerge as sort of like hey man, he’s really awesome, you know? And Simon of Stilanés was a guy like this

. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of him, but there was a guy by the name of David Blaine. He was a magician. Do you remember his trick, where he created a pillar and he stood at the top of the pillar for days? Do you remember that? He got that—and he even said he did!—he got that from Simon of Stilanés who was a monastic, who believed that he was just like the angels, staring at the glory of God as he stood on his pillar. And a lot of these monks said, “I want to kind of get away from society.”

But the funny thing about it is that if you follow the money, the interesting thing is that they would leave society and civilization just far enough so that people wouldn’t be inconvenienced to go out to them and bring them gifts and pay them homage and just stare at them, right? (*Laughter*) Like they were alone, out in the middle of nowhere, and it’s like, aaahh! They had a crowd watching them do these things. You know, again you can see the pride and the vanity that comes through. It’s not a pure kind of thing. So it’s really sort of interesting.

In 1176, a little bit closer to the Reformation, you had Peter Waldo, who was again an Augustinian who appealed to the Scriptures. He said that we need to get back to the Bible.

I had an English professor at Grove City College whose grandmother was a Waldensian, who still hid her Bible in the fireplace when living in Italy. Now whether or not she needed to, that was her heritage, okay?

You had other guys, William Tyndale and John Huss. John Huss was burned at the Council of Constance in the 1400s. You had Savonarola, a fiery guy. And then you even had a guy like Erasmus, who was a contemporary of Martin Luther. And Erasmus was one of those guys who was a scholar. And he liked to poke at the church. But he didn’t want to actually do anything to upset his own apple cart. So Luther calls him all kinds of names, which was typical of Luther. (*Laughter*)

So what about *the criticism*? Well, a couple of criticisms. I want you to know that the Pope as the antichrist did not come out of the Reformation. If you do a study—and Charles Hill has done a study of the antichrist. And he shows emphatically that the accusation that the Pope is the antichrist emerges way before the Reformation ever happened. People within the medieval church were making that accusation.

I already mentioned the Lord’s Supper to you. At the Lateran Council transubstantiation becomes the doctrine of the medieval church. And predestination and election, those kinds of things are difficult.

Well before I go on, I realize that was just really a lot, yeah. Do you have any thoughts or questions about that though?

**Participant:** Jeff, what was that last point after—

**Jeff:** Predestination and election were topics of discussion, and not thought upon very highly in the medieval church.

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**Participant:** Hey, Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Participant:** A few more things that came out of the Lateran Council?

**Jeff:** I’m not up on the Lateran Council. I know that’s a big one.

**Participant:** I think that’s the council where priests definitely could not be married.

**Jeff:** It could be.

**Second Participant:** I believe that the number of seven sacraments was fixed at that council, too.

**Jeff:** Is that right? The seven sacraments were picked at that council?

**Participant:** Yes.

All right. So *Martin Luther*. As you can see, I’m a systematic theologian and not a church historian.

**Participant:** Today’s his birthday.

**Transcriber’s Note:** November 10.

**Men:** Hey! (*Laughter and applause*) All right, Sig!

**Sig:** How old would he be?

**Jeff:** I don’t know. I’m not a mathematician. (*Laughter*) On November 10, 1483, Martin Luther is born. He goes to Erfurt in 1501 to study law. His dad wants him to study law and he does it.

You have to understand this. I think we miss it if we have the idea that back in these times,-- If you want a great, great biography on Martin Luther, get Roland Bainton’s *Here I Stand*.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** It’s still great. It’s been republished for the Reformation and it’s just a great biography. Anything Roland Bainton does on the Reformation is really good.

But he goes off to law school. He’s from a very superstitious sort of family. And you know, he still believes there are goblins in the woods hiding in the lake and things like that. And what happens to him is that he encounters a moment of change in 1505. That moment of change had a lot to do with the superstition that he experienced. He has a friend that dies who is very close to him in that year. He’s also traveling back from a visit to his parents and he’s going through the woods. And a thunderstorm breaks out. And lightning strikes very near to him and actually casts him some feet away from where he was standing. And he’s terrified.

And so what does he do? He cries out, “Saint Anne, I’ll become a monk!” And so he does. He becomes a monk and enters the priesthood in 1507, and did not endear himself to his father who thought he had a lawyer on his hands.

In 1507 he becomes a priest. In fact, you can already tell Luther’s disposition in this sense when he’s serving his first Mass. When he’s serving his first Mass he can’t even hold on? Why? Because he thinks that this is the body and blood of the Lord. So he’s shaking and he basically makes a fool of himself in front of his father. And he’s shamed about that.

In 1508 he transfers to Wittenberg. And in Wittenberg he’s a monk. But he’s a troubled monk because he’s just plagued in his conscience about every sin that he does. And so his

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superiors tell him. They think this will be good for him. They say, “What we want you to do is that we want you to go on a pilgrimage.”

So he makes a pilgrimage to Rome. That was very difficult in those days—bandits and all kinds of hardships that one might encounter during those days.

He makes a pilgrimage to Rome and he climbs what’s called the *Sancta Scalia*. The *Sancta Scalia* are supposedly the steps that Jesus fell upon before Pilate. And people would climb those steps on their knees and kiss each step, believing that they were working off time that they would need to spend in purgatory by doing so. In fact, at the bottom I’m told that there’s a sign that tells you how many years you’ll get off of purgatory if you do this sort of thing. Does anybody know that? Has anybody ever been there?

**Participant:** I’ve heard that people still do that today.

**Jeff:** People still do that today. People still do it today.

In 1512 he receives his doctorate. The interesting thing is that by 1510 he still has not seen a full Bible.

**Participant:** So he made a pilgrimage from Germany to Jerusalem.

**Second Participant:** No. To Rome.

**Jeff:** To Rome. The steps are in Rome.

**Participant:** But why would the steps be in Rome?

**Jeff:** The steps were brought to Rome because again Rome is becoming—

**Participant:** The new Jerusalem.

**Jeff:** Rome is becoming the head church, yes.

**Participant:** And he was scandalized by what he saw in Rome. It’s not only the *Sancta Scalia*. But he saw the corruption firsthand in the church.

**Jeff:** He did. In fact, he said this of the priests. He said, “*In the time that it takes me to say one Mass, these priests can say numerous Masses*”, because they would just run through it. In fact, this is what he said. He said that they ran through it so quickly that the people misconstrued what it was that they were saying. They were supposed to use these words: “*Hoc est corpus Meum. This is My body.*” They were saying it so fast that people thought they were saying, “Hocus pocus.” That’s where we get that expression from—hocus pocus. It was just magic, right? It had that idea; it’s just magic.

So yes. It wasn’t just the *Sancta Scalia*. There were numerous things that he saw. He saw the corruption of the priesthood. He saw the irreverence in the Mass. He actually saw the unbelief of the priesthood. There were unbelieving priests that he encountered at that time, numerous things when he goes there.

In fact, he climbs the *Sancta Scalia*, gets to the top. And how it’s reported is that he stands at the top, turns around and he says, “*But is it true?*”

So in terms of Luther and what’s happening with him internally, there are things afoot inside of him that are working. He’s having his doubts, his struggles. Remember, at home he’s been confessing constantly to his superior, Von Staupitz. And later on Von Staupitz actually says to him, “Luther, stop confessing all these little things. If you want to confess something, give God something to forgive.” (*Laughter*) You know, he actually says,



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“Come back with adultery rather than these peccadillos.” (*Laughter*) That’s what he says to him. Yes?

**Participant:** When did he first see the Bible or read the Bible?

**Jeff:** Well he was seeing the Bible. But he hadn’t seen a total Bible by the time of 1510. He’s a monk, and he still had not seen an entire Bible.

But what he has seen is a lot of philosophy, Aristotelean philosophy. He’s read a lot of the scholastics who had read a lot of philosophy. So by the time he gets to the Reformation, he hates Aristotle and scholasticism. That’s what he says. He actually uses a bit of it himself. So he’s been reading a lot of philosophy.

**Participant:** But when did he get to the basic source of it all, the Bible?

**Jeff:** Well, in 1513 he’s a professor and he starts to study the Psalms, Galatians and Romans. This is the funny thing, though. A lot of times what people think is that his commentary on the epistle to the Romans, they think, Wow! That must be a great book to read! But if you notice, it’s really not. Historically, it’s not that.

And I’ll tell you why it’s not that. It’s because he was still a *nominalist* at the time he wrote that. He still hadn’t come fully to understand that he was saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus alone. He hadn’t come to that experience.

He was still a nominalist. What does that mean? Don’t worry about what that means historically and philosophically. Let me tell you what it means for the theological nominalists of his day. They had a way of conceiving the sovereignty of God, the absolute power of God. And they divided it up into what they called *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*.

Now what does that mean? *Potentia absoluta* is the naked power of God, that God can do whatever He wants. I mean *whatever* He wants! And so they said, “Well wait a second!” How is it that God constrains Himself to be kind and loving when He doesn’t have to be?

Well, that’s the *ordinata*. God covenants with Himself to be a certain way. And so when you think of God, think of the absolute naked power and sovereignty of God. But think of covenant, the *ordinata*, as a leash on the naked sovereignty of God.

So God by way of covenant leashes Himself to kindness and goodness and mercy, and that sort of thing. But what happens is that out of this sort of mistaken theology, the covenant has this. You know, when you hear kindness and mercy and all that, you think of it one way because you’ve had Reformed teaching. For Martin Luther, the idea of what was called *facia entibus* was primary.

That was this. God enters into a covenant and restrains His absolute naked sovereignty, and deals with you on the basis of the best work you can do. That’s what *facia entibus* means. So God rewards you on the best you can do.

Now if you were in that situation, what are you going to ask yourself? You’re going to ask yourself, “Well how much is good enough? And what is the best that I can do?” Okay?

And so what is the solution to that? You can see why Luther was thinking this. Luther is thinking, “How much is good enough? I’ve got to go to the confessional all the time. And I’ve got to confess, and I’ve got to confess, and I’ve got to confess.”

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**Participant:** So what you’re saying, Jeff, is that those were standard doctrines in the church, the *potentia*—

**Jeff:** This was one stream in the church. This was one stream within the church.

**Participant:** That was what Luther was taught to believe.

**Jeff:** Well, he was in an Augustinian order. So Von Staupitz, his superior, was a neo-Augustinian. And the neo-Augustinians were more mystical in character. At least Von Staupitz was. And Von Staupitz would say to Luther, “Look, Luther!” He would actually say, “Give me adultery here. Come on! Quit giving me peccadillos.” But what he would say is this. He would basically say, “Luther, you’ve just got to let go and let God.” Anachronistically, this is really let go and let God. Von Staupitz would say, “Look! Just kind of give yourself up to the being of God. Just kind of bathe in God’s presence”—that sort of thing.

And Luther would do that. And he said, “*Sometimes I felt so wonderful, letting myself go and experiencing God.*” But Luther found out what we already know. And that is that this kind of mysticism only goes so far, because you’re still face to face with your sins. And they’ve not been dealt with. And God is still the Judge.

And so when you begin to talk about a lot of things that are in Scripture, like God is Judge, one of the things that you have to ask yourself is this. If I bathe myself in God’s presence, how am I yet forgiven? And that was what Luther was asking himself.

And so this is a quote from Luther. He says, “*When I was a monk, I wearied myself greatly for almost fifteen years with daily sacrifice, tortured myself with fasting, vigils, prayer and other religious works. I earnestly thought to acquire righteousness by my works.*”

This is what he continues to say. “*My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood as a sinner before God troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage Him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him.*”

And so this is Luther’s situation. “Love God? I hate God!”, right?

And then this. This describes Luther’s experience in a nutshell. The paragraph before this is talking about Romans 1:16 and 17 and the righteousness of God.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Romans 1:16-17, ESV. “*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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith for faith. As it is written: ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*”

**Jeff:** This is what he says. “*Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the righteousness of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith.’ Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn, and to have gone through open doors into Paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. And whereas before the righteousness of God had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet and greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.*”

**Participant:** Where does that come from?

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**Jeff:** You know, I’ve looked for this quote. I get this out of Roland Bainton. But I’ve looked for this quote. He doesn’t footnote it. I have not been able to track it down.

**Participant:** It’s probably in his Galatians commentary.

**Jeff:** It probably is, yes. It probably is.

**Participant:** His Romans commentary.

**Jeff:** I don’t think it’s in Romans though, because his commentary on Romans was written before, when he was still a nominalist. Yes?

**Participant:** He called his commentary on Galatians “*my Katie*.” He loved his wife. And that’s probably where he got it.

**Jeff:** That’s probably where he got it. Okay. You know those old movies, like “Back at the Ranch?” (*Laughter*) Meanwhile, back at the ranch,-- (*Laughter*) the indulgence controversy is going on. And this sweet looking fellow is Pope Leo X. And Pope Leo X was in financial trouble. There were some wars. There were building projects that he wanted to do. And Albrecht of Brandenburg had wanted a third bishopric. And so Pope Leo and Albrecht worked out a little deal, a little money exchange, and they were able to do it.

Now to pay the pope, Albrecht had to pay the pope for that third bishopric. In order to pay the pope, he took out a loan and sold indulgences. And the pope let him do it.

Now what was an indulgence? Let me just say this before I go on. I’m going to give you how it was popularly understood. An indulgence is basically this. How it was popularly understood was that if I pay for this indulgence, then I am sprung free from any time that I have to spend in purgatory.

So Luther actually finds a man in his district, a man that belongs to his church. And he’s drunk on the street. And basically the guy says, “I got an indulgence, you know? I’m good. I’m clear.” And Luther sees the immorality growing in his own district, and has real problems with it.

Two papal bulls are issued. And these two papal bulls say that time in purgatory could be nullified by purchasing an indulgence. John Tetzel becomes the guy who sells these indulgences. There are more people than John Tetzel. But Tetzel becomes the very famous guy in Luther’s district.

Luther drives him out. So he just goes to the district beside Luther and starts selling them. And Luther finds the infiltration in his own district, because people are going and buying indulgences.

And so Luther nails the 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, propositions for debate. And here are just some of the highlights.

He says, “*The church can only remit what the church imposes. The church cannot get God to remit what God imposes.*” That was part of an indulgence, right?

“*Penance is not just a onetime act. It’s lifelong*” said Luther. “*And the treasury of the church is the gospel, not some treasury of merit that we can dish out from the saints.*”

You see, one of the things about the church was that they believed in the *treasury of merit*. So the treasury of merit was that when the saints go above and beyond the good works that they were called to do, those good works were added to the treasury of merit. And then the church could draw down on the treasury of merit and bestow those merits to

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others. And when you bestowed those merits to others, time off of purgatory would ensue.

And so Luther basically said, “Why doesn’t the pope empty the treasury of merit onto the church now?” Don, go ahead.

**Don:** I’m sorry. Did Luther say that penance was a lifelong activity, or repentance?

**Jeff:** Repentance is lifelong.

**Don:** There’s a big difference.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** But Jeff, where did the concept of purgatory come from?

**Jeff:** Well it comes from within the medieval church. And it comes from—I can’t remember—it’s either the first or the second book of Maccabees. That’s where they get the Biblical justification for it, because in that book there is one place in which there are offerings for the dead. And so the medieval church started to adopt that teaching. Go ahead.

**Participant:** Also I believe it’s found in Matthew, which says that you will not be released until you pay the last penny. That is what they drew on. A Roman Catholic priest explained this to me. Purgatory is such that God does forgive. Purgatory does not forgive our offenses against God. But there are offenses we do in this life.

**Jeff:** Temporal offenses.

**Participant:** Temporal offenses.

**Jeff:** So when you go to the Roman Catholic priest and he tells you to say ten Hail Mary’s and five Our Fathers, what he’s basically doing is that he’s telling you to work off the temporal offenses, not the eternal ones.

**Participant:** Because it’s not the eternal offenses against God—

**Jeff:** But this would be my problem with that. It’s the same with the *dulia/latria* distinction, where I’m going to pay reverence and not worship to the statue or to the icon. That gets lost in popular thinking. And so the temporal/eternal sort of working off through the Hail Mary’s and the Our Fathers is, I think, a lost kind of thing.

**Participant:** This sounds like carbon credits to me.

**Jeff:** Carbon credits? *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** He can work off his share, or the priest—

**Jeff:** Hold on just a second, because I want to get to this really quickly. There’s the Leipzig debate after this. Luther is excommunicated in 1520. He’s summoned to the Diet of Worms to repent. And this is his great statement. *“Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”* That’s a famous phrase of his.

But listen. Here’s where I want to get to.

**Transcriber’s Note:** A picture of Pittsburgh’s three rivers.

**Jeff:** This is the river, right? Huh? Now the Ohio River, now it splits, right? The Reformation, right? The clean part going the other way, huh? *(Laughter)* We’re going the other way; we’re flowing backward.

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All right. *The main differences.* If you were to say to me, “Why aren’t you a Roman Catholic?”, I’d give you two reasons. I’d say *salvation* and *authority*.

Now I want to give you something. Look at this. I’m taking this from *The Catholic Source Book*. And it has the *nihil obstat*, which means that there’s nothing objectionable in it, from the Rev. Richard Shafer, and the *imprimatur* of the church, the permission to print from the Roman Catholic Church, the Most Reverend Jerome Hanus.

This is what that book says. “*The theological differences seem now to have been around authority and salvation.*” They agree. “*The authority of Scripture and the church, or Scripture only.*” The Roman Catholic position is the authority of Scripture and the church. The Protestant position is Scripture only.

“*Salvation by grace and works*”—that’s the Roman Catholic view—“*or by grace alone.*” That’s *The Roman Catholic Source Book*” with the *imprimatur* from the church.

**Participant:** Hey Jeff, one quick point that I’ve learned from Catholics is that because the Canon is closed; there are no more books being added to the Bible; Genesis to Revelation—I don’t know about the Apocrypha, but Genesis to Revelation is closed. And it’s a gift to the church.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** So it’s up to the church to interpret that. That’s what Catholics have told me.

**Jeff:** Well, the Catholics believe that the authority to interpret—and actually, I think that again, in the popular conception of it they may nuance it—but who was it that canonized the Scriptures? It was the church. So authority comes from the church and flows out through the Scriptures. It’s not that they’re not the word of God. But they’ve been entrusted to the church. They take that idea that “*the church is the pillar and ground of the truth*” in an entirely different way than we do as Protestants.

Luther believed in justification by faith alone. The Counter-Reformation met at the Council of Trent. I happen to base the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1563.

The Protestant Reformation took one stream of what was growing up in the church and said, “This is what we believe.” And the Counter-Reformation took other things—the differing Bibles and the differing ways of salvation.

This is Canon IX from the Council of Trent. You’ve got to listen to this. “*If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the attaining the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his will, let him be anathema*”, or accursed.

So according to the Roman Catholic Church, if we believe in justification by faith alone, we are under the curse. No matter what they say, that has never been repealed by the Roman Catholic Church.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff shows some pictures.

**Jeff:** That’s the *Sancta Scalia*. That’s what goes on there today. It still goes on.

I want to show you this. I want you to imagine. I get this from a Roman Catholic high school theology book, okay? This line indicates heaven and hell. This first block indicates

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a baby born. The baby is born entirely in hell. Have you ever heard a Roman Catholic grandmother say, “Don’t you take that baby out of the house before it’s baptized?” Why? Because it’s in hell, and if it dies, it’s going to hell.

Well what happens when that baby is baptized? *Ex opera operato. Out of the work, the work.* In other words, that baby is infused with saving grace through baptism. So if that baby dies immediately after being baptized, that baby is going to heaven.

Now let’s say that baby becomes a teenager and commits sin. And so you have what? A falling below the line. You have a loss of the infusion of grace, right? And so you’re falling below the line.

Then what happens if this person dies at this stage? They’re a little in heaven, and they’re a little in hell. They have to work off this part of it in purgatory, in order then to go to heaven. What happens—What’s that?

**Participant:** If it’s a venial sin. If it’s a mortal sin, you go to hell.

**Jeff:** We’re getting there. (*Laughter*) What happens if you commit a mortal sin? You fall entirely. You have lost the grace of justification that you received in baptism. You are totally below the line.

Now the Roman Catholic Catechism says this. How do you get back to where you started?

**Participant:** Penance.

**Jeff:** Penance. The Roman Catholic Catechism says “*the second plank of justification.*” That’s the language used. It’s penance. And so what happens is that you begin to experience the infusion of grace. And the infusion of grace brings you back above the line.

But look! That’s the way it’s construed and taught in the Roman Catholic Church to high school boys and girls. So that’s kind of disturbing. That is just what *The Catholic Source Book* says. Salvation by grace and works. In other words, they would say that even though they believe the instrumentation is different than what we believe. We believe that we’re saved by the instrumentation of faith, right? But it’s Christ who saves us through that instrumentation. They would say that it’s through the waters of baptism that we’re saved, that we receive that grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But once having received that, now you’re put in a position to work to maintain it.

Then the other is *the infallibility of the Bible or the infallibility of the pope.* Why am I a Protestant? Salvation and authority.

Salvation by grace matters. And the authority of the Scriptures matter.

And I’m over. So let me pray. Don, go ahead. You had a question.

**Don:** How could they have missed it for so long? A Roman Catholic apologist would say that Luther invented imputation. We know that’s not true. I know the church fathers. But how could they have missed it for so long?

**Jeff:** Yes. But think about it like this, Don. I asked that question to Andy Hoffbecker. He was my church history professor at Grove City College. And what he said was this. He said, “Remember, this is Christ’s church and the light never goes out.” And if you look at church history even during those years, you have people like Augustine and

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Gottschalk, and people who held to the gospel during those times. They had been persecuted for it even within the church. But the light never fully went out.

So when you had the division of streams during the time of the Reformation, I think what you have is the light going in one direction and the darkness going in another. That’s my take on it.

**Participant:** Just a comment. The darkness hasn’t gone away, either, because we had to start a whole new seminary because of how dark it had gotten in our denomination.

**Jeff:** No golden age, right? No golden time in the church. That’s exactly right. And you know, we’re going to face that until the end.

**Participant:** It seems to me today that probably 80 or 90% of the Protestant churches have really fallen back to the pre-Reformation doctrines.

**Jeff:** I don’t know if I can trust you on that.

**Participant:** In terms of Arminian and Augustinian—

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** That Tridentine statement that you quoted actually condemns Arminianism at the same time.

**Jeff:** I do remember that, yes. That’s right. Isn’t that odd? That’s odd. Anybody else? Yes?

**Participant:** Purgatory comes from (*unclear*) the rabbinical studies—the Cabala and so on.

**Jeff:** It comes under Sheol, right? The idea of Sheol.

**Participant:** It was morphed. I don’t know how, but the genesis of that was that your soul had to burn in the sewer behind Jerusalem before it could make its way back into energy, or something like that.

**Jeff:** And hence, I think that’s where the Maccabean idea enters into it. Anybody else? All right. I’ll see you in two weeks.

Let me pray with you before we go. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given. Thank You, Lord, that though the times may be dark, they are never actually pitch. Lord, thank You that You continue to provide light. And Lord, we pray that light would continue to grow ever more bright. And we pray it in Christ’s name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)