

Key Figure: Martin Luther

Why is Martin Luther important?

- Who in here likes the doctrine of justification by faith alone?
- Who in here likes not being under the authority of the pope?
- Who in here likes having a Bible in your own language?
- Who in here thinks that the Bible is all we need to know God?
- Who in here thinks that marriage and intimacy are gifts from God and that pastors can be married?
- Who in here thinks that all Christians are equally close to God because of Christ?
- Who in here is anything other than Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox?
- Who in here likes that you don't have to go to purgatory before you can go to heaven?

You have Martin Luther to thank.



What life was like as a Christian in the Middle Ages

- You didn't have a Bible in your own language.
- But even if you did, you couldn't read!
- Services were in Latin.
- You didn't get to have the wine in communion - only the bread.
- The church was corrupt both in doctrine and practice in several areas.
- You had to go to God through a priest.
- They believed that salvation was a cooperation of God's grace and man's effort.

"Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam" ("God does not deny grace to the man who does what is in him") - Thomas Aquinas

Early life

- His name is not actually Martin Luther. His last name was “Luder.” He is called “Luther” because it was popular at this time, if you were a man of erudition, to take a Greek or Latin title for your name. Martin took the name “eleutherius” (“liberator”) and “Luther” came from “eleutherius.” His best friend, Phillip Melanchthon did the same. Phillip’s real last name was Schwartzerd (German for “black earth”) which is what “Melanchthon” means in Greek.
- Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany.
- His mother’s name was Margaret and his father’s name was Hans (Hans was a coal miner).
- Martin was one of about 8 siblings; only 4 of which would make it to adulthood.
- His dad was extremely overbearing with young Martin. Luther’s upbringing was very harsh and legalistic. He reports of being whipped at school for failing to do his lessons, and supposedly his teachers and his dad beat him so badly that it occasionally drew blood.
- He almost died at the age of 19. A dagger pierced his leg and cut an artery while traveling on a journey, but his friend was able to get Luther to a doctor in time to save his live.
- His dad made enough money to send Luther to school to study law in 1501 at the University of Erfurt. The hope was that he would become a lawyer, which would help his family financially.
- In 1505 Luther was traveling back to the university when he was caught in a thunderstorm (a lightning bolt almost struck him). He cried out to St. Anne, the patron saint of miners, and promised her that, if she saved him from the storm, he would become a monk. Luther survived and he kept his promise by enrolling in an Augustinian monastery against his father’s wishes.

Luther as a monk

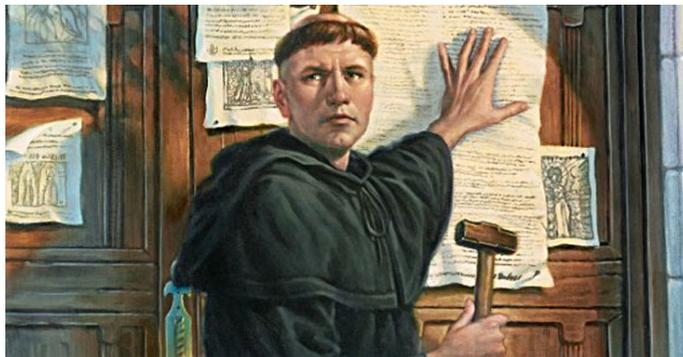
- Luther was a rigidly legalistic monk.
 - He went to confession so often that other monks told him to go away and come back when he had something real to confess.
 - He said, “If someone could have earned salvation through monkery, it was I.”
- Luther was sent to Rome to deliver letters on a 9-month trip. For this, he earned 10,000 years off of purgatory which he graciously gave to his grandparents.
- He eventually received his doctorate and became a professor of theology at the newly founded University of Wittenberg.
- It was while lecturing on the Psalms and Romans that he came to his view of justification. Most people think that it was just Romans that changed him, but his transformation really began with the Psalms. He had them all memorized, and he was amazed that the psalmist seemed to wrestle with God and his faith.
- The Tower Experience – Romans 1:17 - For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing

stood in the way but that one expression ‘the righteousness of God,’ because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage Him. Therefore, I did not love a just angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the righteousness of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by 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 in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven...” -Martin Luther

The role of indulgences

- What are indulgences?
- They were being raised for the building of St. Peter’s Basilica.
- One of the top “salesman” for indulgences was a guy named John Tetzel.
- On Oct 31, 1517 Luther posted 95 points of debate with the Catholic Church on the door at the Castle Church in Wittenberg.



Examples from the 95 Theses:

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘repent’ He intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.” - Thesis 1

“They preach man made doctrines who say that it’s so soon as the coin jingles into the money box, the soul flies out of purgatory.” -Thesis 27

“Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence-preachers he would rather that St. Peter’s church should go to ashes than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his

sheep.” -Thesis 50

“The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.” -Thesis 62

Luther gets into trouble

-A guy named Cardinal Thomas Cajetan was sent to get a revocation from Luther, but Luther would not recant.

-Another scholar, a guy named John Eck, debated Luther at the Leipzig Disputation and showed that Luther had sympathies with John Hus who had been burned as a heretic for promoting predestination, the corruption of the church, and that one could go directly to God without the aid of the church. Hus’ (and Luther’s) ideas threatened the power of the Catholic Church.

-Luther was excommunicated by the pope in 1520. Luther burned the bull of excommunication publicly in the town square!



“Arise, O Lord, and judge your own cause... The wild boar from the forest [Luther] seeks to destroy it and every wild beast feeds upon it... Against the Roman Church, you warned, lying teachers are rising, introducing ruinous sects, and drawing upon themselves speedy doom. Their tongues are fire, a restless evil, full of deadly poison. They have bitter zeal, contention in their hearts, and boast and lie against the truth... Moreover, because the preceding errors and many others are contained in the books or writings of Martin Luther, we likewise condemn, reprobate, and reject completely the books and all the writings and sermons of the said Martin, whether in Latin or any other language, containing the said errors or any one of them; and we wish them to be regarded as utterly condemned, reprobated, and rejected... As far as Martin himself is concerned... we can, without any further citation or delay, proceed against him to his condemnation and damnation as one whose faith is notoriously suspect and in fact a true heretic with the full severity of each and all of the above penalties and censures.” -*Exurge Domine*, the Papal Bull of Excommunication for Martin Luther

-In 1521 Luther was summoned to what is called the Diet of Worms where he faced a guy named John Eck - but not the same John Eck he had already debated!

-At the council Luther was asked to repent and forsake his views or be condemned. He asked for a day to consider his decision and responded the next day with...

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason (for I trust neither pope nor council alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited, for my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since to act against one’s conscience is neither safe nor right.” -Martin Luther



-Luther had already opposed the pope by burning his excommunication document; now he is defying the emperor by refusing to recant.

Luther after being condemned

-Knowing that Luther would be condemned, after the meeting, Frederick the Wise had Luther kidnapped and brought to the Wartburg castle so he wouldn't be killed. While at the castle Luther grew a beard, started dressing like a knight, and translated the entire New Testament into German by himself in just 10 weeks. He took the name Junker Jorge (“Sir George” or “Knight George”) during that time.

-Luther was a superstitious man by today's standards and often thought he was fighting against the devil. One time a dog ran into the castle where Luther was and, since he was convinced it was a demon, he threw it out the window and killed it.

-In 1525 he married a former nun who had been smuggled away from her convent in a fish barrel. Her name was Katherine Von Bora whom Luther called “Lord Katie” and “my rib.” He was 41 and she was 26 when they got married. To prevent Roman Catholic rumors about his marriage they had to have someone witness their consummation of the marriage which the witness described as a quite awful affair.



-They had 6 kids: Hans, Elizabeth (who died in infancy), Magdalena (who died at 13), Martin, Paul and Margaret. His sons became a lawyer, a private citizen, and a doctor.

-His wife, Katie, was called the “morning star of the Reformation” and ran their household well. She would awake each morning at 4am to manage their children and finances. She was a housewife, a beer brewer, a swine-herder, an herbalist, a massage therapist, and a gardener. One time when Luther was wallowing in his depression she dressed up in a black funeral dress and told Luther that since he was acting like God was dead that she would join him for the funeral...this caused Luther to get back to work.

-Luther died on February 18, 1546 from pulmonary arrest at the age of 62. He left his possessions to his wife despite the fact that it was against Saxon law because she was a woman.

Negative things about Luther

1. He was very crass.

For example...

He said that the pope is as fit to judge spiritual matters as “an ass [donkey] is to play a harp.”

“You are a brothel-keeper and the devil’s daughter in hell.” -Martin Luther

2. He got drunk a lot.

-His wife brewed beer in their bathtub. Luther confessed, "I boggle up food like a Bohemian and guzzle [beer] like a German; God be thanked for it."

-He got in trouble at a party in Dresden because of this. He got drunk and starting bad-mouthing Thomas Aquinas.

-He once wrote to a young man struggling with despair and told him to get drunk because that's what Luther did when he was sad.

3. He allowed an important German, Philip of Hesse, to take a second wife because his wife wasn't fulfilling him sexually (Luther later repented of this).

4. The German-Peasants War.



5. Intense spiritual attack.

6. He was anti-semitic, but for spiritual (not racial) reasons.

-He wrote a book called *On the Jews and their Lies*

"Did I not tell you earlier that a Jew is such a noble, precious jewel that God and all the angels dance when he passes gas?... Their synagogues [should] be burned down, and that all who are able toss in sulfur and pitch; it would be good if someone could also throw in some hellfire. That would demonstrate to God our serious resolve and be evidence to all the world that it was in ignorance that we tolerated such houses, in which the Jews have reviled God, our dear Creator and Father, and his Son most shamefully up till

now but that we have now given them their due reward." -Martin Luther, *On the Jews and their Lies*

7. He could be divisive when he didn't need to be.

-Luther's unbending temperament kept the reformers from uniting because he wouldn't compromise with Ulrich Zwingli's on the meaning of communion.

Why is Luther a Hero?

1. Justification by faith alone.

"If I could believe that God was not angry with me, I would stand on my head for joy" -Martin Luther

2. Scripture as the sole ultimate authority in Christianity .

"I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip of Amsdorf the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing: the Word did it all." – Martin Luther

3. All people have equal access to God in Christ.

4. The life and work of the average person has spiritual value.

"There is really no difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, 'spirituals' and 'temporals,' as they call them, except that of office and work...A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another." –Martin Luther

5. Mankind is not born wounded but is born spiritually dead.

6. A return to Augustine's doctrine of predestination.

7. The church is not an institution but wherever the gospel is purely preached.

8. A theology of two kingdoms.

9. A theology of the cross.

10. The distinction between Law and Gospel.

“Simul iustus et peccator” (simultaneously justified and a sinner)

<http://www.ccle.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/LutherSermon.pdf>

11. His focus on walking in grace.

“God wants us to keep the Commandments with total commitment and diligence; but not to put our trust in them when we have done so; or despair if we have not.” -Martin Luther

“If you are a preacher of mercy, do not preach an imaginary but a true mercy...God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. Be a sinner, and sin boldly, but let your trust in Christ be stronger.” -Martin Luther

“Whenever the devil harasses you, seek the company of men or drink more, or joke and talk nonsense, or do some other merry thing. Sometimes we must drink more, sport, recreate ourselves and even sin a little to spite the devil, so that we leave him no place for troubling our consciences with trifles. We are conquered if we try too conscientiously not to sin at all. So when the devil says to you: ‘do not drink,’ answer him: ‘I will drink, and right freely, just because you tell me not to.’” –Martin Luther