

Church History

Lesson 28 - Luther's Later Life & Theology - From Wartburg to His Death

1. Introduction - Earliest Years of the Reformation

- 1.1. As we saw last time, humanists such as Erasmus had prepared the way for the Reformation. The recovery of Greek and Hebrew, and a desire to return to the original sources, along with the obvious need for reformation in the church, opened the door for great changes to come.
- 1.2. Luther was the one who was used by God to spark the Reformation. His personal struggles, experiences, and study of the Scripture opened his eyes to the Gospel over several years. This culminated in the nailing of the 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg.
- 1.3. Although Luther had not intended to do anything other than debate abuses of indulgences and other practices of the church, a firestorm was ignited. As events continued, Luther came to see even more clearly the problems with the practices and beliefs of the church. He came to see that many of these - penance, a false sacramentalism, a wrong view of grace, the priesthood, the papacy, the cult of relics and saints, tradition as equal or more authoritative than Scripture, indulgences, etc. - actually obscured or outright denied the Gospel and the sufficiency of Christ.
- 1.4. This ended at the Council of Worms where Luther was declared a heretic. This meant that no one was to harbor him or give him aid. However, Frederick had foreseen this and surreptitiously set up to have Luther kidnapped in the woods on the return to Wittenberg. He was taken to the castle at Wartburg to remain in hiding.
- 1.5. Today we will look at the events flowing from this, the rest of Luther's life, and the theology of Luther to see his effect down until our present day.

2. Wartburg and the German New Testament

- 2.1. Luther was secretly taken to Wartburg, where he remained in hiding. He assumed the identity of a fictitious nobleman named Junker Georg. He grew a beard and a full head of hair to cover his monk's tonsure. To maintain innocence, not even Frederick knew where Luther had been taken. However, Luther soon sent word to some of his closest friends so they knew he was still alive. But his time at Wartburg - which Luther referred to as his "Patmos" - would last for almost a year. During this time he sent out a flurry of writings, including commentaries on biblical texts, sermons for Advent, and a tract defending justification by faith alone.
 - 2.1.1. Besides many letters from the "land of the birds" to colleagues, he wrote a commentary on the Magnificat, a Latin exposition of the Psalms, a tract against Latomus (Jakob Masson) in which he provides one of his most articulate expositions of his doctrine of justification, the German "postils" (sermons) for Advent, and various polemical works. - Woodbridge and James, location 2577
- 2.2. Fortunately, one of the few possessions Luther had with him when he was kidnapped was his Greek New Testament. Thus, during this time Luther translated the New Testament into German. The monumental nature of this can hardly be overstated. For the first time in almost a millennium, the words of the New Testament were to become widely available in the language of the people in the West. This German New Testament became an instant hit, selling as fast as they

- could be printed, and going through multiple printings to keep up with demand. The German people began to read and understand the New Testament for themselves.
- 2.2.1.** When he was seized by the elector's soldiers, Luther had managed to bring one of his most precious possessions: his Greek New Testament. This would turn out to be one of the most important actions of the Reformation period, because this text became the primary resource for his German translation. - Woodbridge and James, location 2567
 - 2.2.2.** The Duke gave Luther sanctuary at his lonely Wartburg Castle. Disguised as a minor nobleman, Junker George, the Reformer stayed for nearly a year; during the time he translated the New Testament into German, an important first step toward reshaping public and private worship in Germany. - Shelley, location 4498
 - 2.2.3.** Hidden at Wartburg, Luther grew a beard, sent word to some of his closest friends not to fear for him, and spent his time writing. His most significant work of this period was the German translation of the Bible. - Gonzales, location 677
 - 2.2.4.** For nearly a year (May 1521 – March 1522) Luther submitted to the elector's enforced isolation at what he called his "Patmos." Luther grew his own disguise — a full beard and a full head of hair covering his tonsure. He wore the garments of a knight and took the name "Junker George." - Woodbridge and James, location 2571
- 2.3.** Amazingly, Luther completed his translation of the New Testament in just three months. However, the effect of the Luther's German New Testament was far reaching, not only in his own day but all the way to the present. Not only did it fan the flames of Reformation for his day, but it has had this effect down to the present day. Furthermore it led to the translation of the New Testament into other languages, including English. Luther was a major influence on the work of William Tyndale, who not only followed Luther's example of translating the New Testament into the language of the people, but also adopted Luther's philosophy of translating in a way to make the Scripture accessible to the common man. Tyndale also translated some of the Luther's prefaces to the New Testament and its books into English and included them with his translation.
- 2.3.1.** But the most enduring literary legacy from the Wartburg was his brilliant translation of the New Testament. - Woodbridge and James, location 2581
 - 2.3.2.** In the remarkable period of three months, Luther produced a German translation unlike any previous translation. His translation was based on the original Greek text rather than the outdated Latin Vulgate, and it used a philosophy of translation that stressed clarity and sensitivity to the rhythms of everyday German. - Woodbridge and James, location 2582
 - 2.3.3.** Luther later expressed his view that a good translation will look to "the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the market place." He added, "We must be guided by their language, the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly." - Woodbridge and James, location 2584
 - 2.3.4.** Erasmus's 1519 critical Greek edition of the New Testament was never out of reach during the crucial months of translation. When Luther returned to Wittenberg, he brought his completed translation to his close friend, the Greek scholar Philipp Melancthon, who offered refinements. - Woodbridge and James, location 2586

3. Luther's Return to Wittenberg

- 3.1.** During Luther's exile at Wartburg, his companions in Wittenberg began to implement changes to church worship and life. Foremost among the ones making these changes were Melanchthon, Professor of Greek and Luther's closest friend and companion, and Karlstadt, who had been Luther's boss at the university. Melanchthon was of a calm, cautious temperament, but Karlstadt was bold and impetuous at times. Melanchthon began to allow the people to have not only the bread but also the cup at communion. However, Karlstadt went further, preaching sermons calling for major changes. Soon a number of monks had left the monastery and married. Masses for the dead were abolished. At first, Luther approved of these changes. But as Karlstadt and his followers began smashing images of saints in the church buildings and coming close to riots, Luther began to urge moderation.
- 3.1.1.** While translating the New Testament at Wartburg Castle, Luther's reformation continued without him. Leadership of the reform movement fell to two of Luther's university colleagues: Melanchthon (1497–1560), who was the first professor of Greek, and Karlstadt (1480–1541), the dean of the Wittenberg faculty. Of the two men, Melanchthon was closer to Luther. - Woodbridge and James, location 2598
- 3.1.2.** Melanchthon had fallen under Luther's spell and became a favorite almost immediately upon his arrival in 1518. These two men had a profound spiritual connection that was so deep that it survived theological differences when Luther's other relationships did not. - Woodbridge and James, location 2601
- 3.1.3.** He requested that Melanchthon replace him temporarily as the preacher in the city church, but the town council balked at the thought of a married layman leading the worship. Although he was a brilliant theologian, Melanchthon's natural timidity and youth did not prepare him for leadership at such a tumultuous time. Almost by default, leadership fell to Karlstadt, thus setting the stage for the first significant breach within the new reform movement. - Woodbridge and James, location 2628
- 3.1.4.** Without Luther's presence to qualify his bold assertions, Karlstadt took Luther's criticism of the Roman mass to heart and began to preach mandatory reforms. On Christmas Day in 1521, Karlstadt broke with tradition by celebrating mass without vestments, dressed as a layman, employing the German language, and most significantly, distributing the bread and the wine to the laity — something that had been prohibited since the twelfth century. - Woodbridge and James, location 2632
- 3.1.5.** Although Karlstadt sought orderly reform, his break with tradition inspired outbreaks of iconoclasm: sermons were disrupted, and priests were pelted with stones and dung. Subsequent sermons denounced pictures and images as violations of the second commandment. Gabriel Zwilling led some of the Augustinian monks in smashing statues, burning pictures, and destroying other symbols of the old faith. - Woodbridge and James, location 2636
- 3.1.6.** But now, while he was absent, several such steps were taken in rapid succession. A number of monks and nuns left their monastic communities and were married. Worship was simplified, and German was substituted for Latin. Masses for the dead were abolished, as were days of fasting and abstinence.

Melanchthon also began to offer communion in both kinds—that is, to give the laity the cup as well as the host. - Gonzales, location 686

- 3.1.7.** At first, Luther supported these changes. But soon he began to question the excesses that were taking place at Wittenberg. When Karlstadt and several of his followers began tearing down images of saints in churches, Luther recommended moderation. - Gonzales, location 689
- 3.2.** Just before Christmas, the Zwickau prophets - three laymen from the neighboring town of Zwickau - arrived. These men were spreading the teaching and influence of the radical Anabaptist leader Thomas Muntzer. They taught that the Holy Spirit spoke to them directly and they therefore had no need of the Scriptures to tell them God's mind and will. They also rejected infant baptism, the priesthood, and taught that the world would soon end. They began to create real problems and Melanchthon appealed to Luther for advice and help. Luther rightly recognized the unorthodox nature of many of their beliefs and their hyper-spiritual claims, and quipped "They have swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all." However, Luther also sensed real danger from this group and decided he had to return to Wittenberg personally. Additionally, the city council requested Luther return to quell the uproar occurring in the city. Luther agreed, but before doing so he notified Frederick, and released the Elector from any responsibility to protect him - God would do that.
 - 3.2.1.** Then three laymen appeared at Wittenberg from neighboring Zwickau, declaring themselves prophets. They claimed that God spoke directly to them, and that they therefore had no need for Scripture. Melanchthon was at a loss as to how to respond to such claims, and asked Luther's advice. Finally, the latter decided that what was at stake was nothing less than the gospel itself, and that he must return to Wittenberg. Before taking that step, he notified Frederick the Wise of his intentions, making it clear that he was returning to Wittenberg counting not on Frederick's protection but on God's. - Gonzales, location 691
 - 3.2.2.** Into this increasingly volatile situation in Wittenberg came the "Zwickau Prophets"—Nicholas Storch, Marcus Thomae (Stübner), and Thomas Dreschel. These "prophets" had come under the apocalyptic teaching of Thomas Müntzer in the south German city of Zwickau. Arriving soon after Christmas, they claimed divine authority through dreams and visions. - Woodbridge and James, location 2640
 - 3.2.3.** they rejected traditional teaching on infant baptism and the priesthood, and they were convinced the world would soon come to an end. Luther was not impressed with them and wisecracked, "They have swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all." - Woodbridge and James, location 2643
 - 3.2.4.** The Zwickau Prophets eventually left Wittenberg, but things were clearly getting out of hand. Melanchthon was overwhelmed and made an appeal to Luther to return to Wittenberg and restore order. - Woodbridge and James, location 2645
 - 3.2.5.** By February the city was in such an uproar that the city council begged Luther to return. He arrived back in Wittenberg on March 6, and the following Sunday began his famous "Invocavit sermons," in which he denounced violence and made a plea for patience and tolerance. - Woodbridge and James, location 2648

- 3.3.** Upon his return on March 6, Luther restored peace and order, especially through his series of “Invocavit sermons,” which denounced violence and called for patience and tolerance. This reinforced the personal importance, magnetism, and influence of Luther.
- 3.3.1.** By February the city was in such an uproar that the city council begged Luther to return. He arrived back in Wittenberg on March 6, and the following Sunday began his famous “Invocavit sermons,” in which he denounced violence and made a plea for patience and tolerance. - Woodbridge and James, location 2648
- 3.3.2.** Almost immediately, calm was restored to Wittenberg. - Woodbridge and James, location 2652
- 3.4.** After his return, Luther began to institute reforms to the worship and life of Wittenberg. These included many changes such as abolishing the office of bishop, removing celibacy for priests, revising the Latin liturgy to remove any hint of sacrifice or transubstantiation and translating it into German, and allowing the people to receive communion in both bread and wine. Furthermore, the focus of worship shifted from the sacrifice of the Eucharist to the preaching of the Word. However, he continued to wear his monks cowl, and rolled back some of the more radical reforms of Karlstadt. Although he at first quietly submitted to this, Karlstadt eventually left Wittenberg in 1523 to become a parish priest in the small town of Orlamünde, where he implemented reforms as he saw fit. Unfortunately, this led to a brief pamphlet war between Luther and Karlstadt as they disagreed over the breadth and speed of changes required. At one point Karlstadt had to return to Wittenberg, but ultimately he became more closely aligned with the Swiss Reformation, and he became a pastor in Zurich, and a professor of Old Testament in Basel until his death in 1541.
- 3.4.1.** In 1522, Luther returned to Wittenberg to put into effect a spiritual reform that became the model for much of Germany. He abolished the office of bishop since he found no warrant for it in Scripture. The churches needed pastors not dignitaries. Most of the ministers in Saxony and surrounding territories abandoned celibacy. Monks and nuns also married. Luther himself took a wife in 1525, a former nun, Katherine von Bora. A new image of the ministry appeared in Western Christianity—the married pastor living like any other man with his own family. - Shelley, location 4503
- 3.4.2.** Luther also revised the Latin liturgy and translated it into German. The laity received the Communion in bread and wine, as the Hussites had demanded a century earlier. And the whole emphasis in worship changed from the celebration of the sacrificial Mass to the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. - Shelley, location 4509
- 3.4.3.** Luther retained many of the old forms of worship and for a time even resumed wearing the monk’s hooded cowl. He did change the wording of the mass so that there was no hint of a repeated sacrifice or transubstantiation, and he continued distributing the bread and wine to the laity. - Woodbridge and James, location 2653
- 3.4.4.** Karlstadt quietly submitted to the slower pace of reform, but he was deeply disappointed. - Woodbridge and James, location 2656
- 3.4.5.** He left Wittenberg in the summer of 1523 to become the parish priest in the small town of Orlamünde, where he implemented reforms as he saw fit. - Woodbridge and James, location 2657

- 3.4.6. The Wittenberg Reformers did not approve of Karlstadt's ideas, and a small treatise war ensued between Luther and Karlstadt. - Woodbridge and James, location 2658
- 3.4.7. In the following years, Karlstadt came to identify most closely with the Zürich Reformers and their eucharistic theology. He served as a pastor in Zürich from 1530 to 1534 and later as a professor of Old Testament in Basel until he died in 1541. - Woodbridge and James, location 2661

4. The Peasants War

- 4.1. Luther had thought of the Reformation in spiritual and ecclesiastical terms, but others saw it as having social, economic, and societal implications. The peasants of Germany, who had rebelled against unfair treatment by the nobles in 1476, 1491, 1498, 1503, and 1514, read Luther's *Freedom of the Christian Man* through such a lens. This was to lead to one of the darkest episodes in the early Reformation - the Peasants Revolt of 1524-1525.
 - 4.1.1. The Peasants Revolt (1524–25) Luther's reformation movement, although he never intended it, opened the door for ideas much more radical than those of Karlstadt. - Woodbridge and James, location 2664
 - 4.1.2. When Luther published his book *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, it touched a nerve not just among Christians, but among the lower classes of German society. A reformation in doctrine was not worth its salt if it did not impact the people and their daily lives — or so they believed. - Woodbridge and James, location 2667
 - 4.1.3. In 1524, a peasant rebellion broke out. For decades the conditions of the German peasantry had been worsening. As a result, there had been rebellions in 1476, 1491, 1498, 1503, and 1514. But none of these was as widespread or as devastating as the uprisings of 1524 and 1525. - Gonzales, location 736
- 4.2. The peasants had many valid complaints, and created a pamphlet with twelve demands, including abolition of serfdom (since all Christians were free and equal), and said that everything must be proved by the Scripture (including serfdom and laws which they viewed as crushing them under foot). Initially Luther seemed to be sympathetic to their complaints, and chastised the nobles for their mistreatment of the peasants.
 - 4.2.1. The German peasants revolted against their lords. Long ground down by the nobles, the peasants included in their twelve demands abolition of serfdom— unless it could be justified from the gospel—and relief from the excessive services demanded of them. - Shelley, location 4513
 - 4.2.2. When he first read the Twelve Articles, he addressed the princes, telling them that what was demanded of them in the articles was just, for the peasants were sorely oppressed.
 - 4.2.3. Luther was very sympathetic to the plight of the peasants. He responded to the Twelve Articles with his *Admonition to Peace* in May 1525. He placed the largest part of the blame for the trouble squarely on the shoulders of the secular and ecclesiastical landowners. Their greed, Luther argued, was pressing Germany to the precipice of civil war. - Woodbridge and James, location 2703

- 4.2.4.** However, just as Luther had a word for the oppressors, he also had a word for the oppressed: No matter how just your cause, rebellion is never excusable for the Christian. He concluded by urging both groups to negotiate peacefully. - Woodbridge and James, location 2707
- 4.3.** These legitimate complaints of the peasants were stoked and turned to violence by the radical ideas and preaching of Thomas Muntzer. It is likely that Muntzer had sat under the teaching of Luther, and he initially hailed Luther as a hero. However, Muntzer soon moved to more radical ideas. He came to believe that God's Word could only be heard from God's own mouth, and not from theology books or even the Bible. Scripture was replaced with experience. Furthermore, he began to teach that princes must set up a theocratic kingdom and destroy the wicked. He even said "Do not therefore allow the evil-doers, who turn us away from God, to continue living ... for a godless man has no right to live." Such ideas were fuel on the growing fire.
- 4.3.1.** There is little doubt that he sat under Luther's teaching, and at first Muntzer hailed Luther as a hero. - Woodbridge and James, location 2672
- 4.3.2.** Muntzer came to believe that the Word of God must be heard from God's own mouth and not from theology books or even the Bible. One apprehends the true Word of God internally through mystical experience. Muntzer replaced Luther's sola scriptura with a sola experientia. - Woodbridge and James, location 2675
- 4.3.3.** Muntzer's sola experientia took a violent turn in Allstedt. He began referring to himself as the "hammer and sickle" of God against the ungodly. - Woodbridge and James, location 2678
- 4.3.4.** "Do not therefore allow the evil-doers, who turn us away from God, to continue living ... for a godless man has no right to live." - Woodbridge and James, location 2680
- 4.3.5.** Muntzer fell in with the leadership among peasant rebels in Mühlhausen and added his violent apocalyptic vision to the deepening dissatisfaction among peasants. - Woodbridge and James, location 2681
- 4.3.6.** Although Luther himself refused to extend the application of his teachings to the political realm in terms of revolution, there were others who disagreed with him on that point. Foremost among these was Thomas Muntzer, a native of Zwickau, whose early teachings were similar to those of the "prophets" from his village who created such a stir in Wittenberg. Muntzer claimed that what was most important was not the written word of Scripture but the present revelation of the Spirit. In his case, such spiritualist doctrine had political consequences, for he felt that those who had been born again via the Spirit should join in a theocratic community to bring about the Kingdom of God. Luther had forced Muntzer out of Saxony, for he feared the consequences of his teachings. But the fiery preacher returned and joined the peasant rebellion. - Gonzales, location 739
- 4.4.** Eventually the peasants turned violent, and Luther turned strongly against them. At heart Luther was conservative and he could brook no rebellions. He wrote a venomous pamphlet called *Against the Thievish and Murderous Hordes of Peasants*. In it he called on the princes to "to knock down, strangle, and stab . . . and think nothing so venomous, pernicious, or Satanic as an insurgent." Luther's strong language - which had often served him so well - here got completely out of hand and turned against him. The princes took these words to heart and violently

crushed the rebellion. On May 12, 1525, 7,000 peasant soldiers led by Muntzer were crushed by some German nobles in a slaughter. Over 6,000 peasants were killed, while the noble army only lost 6 men. Muntzer fled, but was soon captured, tortured, and beheaded. In all, almost 100,000 peasants were eventually killed during the uprising and its aftermath. During the bloodletting Luther appealed for mercy, but it was too late and the princes refused to heed his word.

- 4.4.1. At first, Luther recognized the justice of the peasants' complaints, but when they turned to violence against established authority, he lashed out against them. In a virulent pamphlet, *Against the Thievish and Murderous Hordes of Peasants*, Luther called on the princes to "knock down, strangle, and stab . . . and think nothing so venomous, pernicious, or Satanic as an insurgent." - Shelley, location 4515
- 4.4.2. On May 12, 1525, he led seven thousand peasant soldiers into battle near Frankenhäusen against the German nobles. It was a slaughter. Over six thousand peasants were killed, while the nobles lost only six soldiers. Müntzer fled to the nearby town, where he was discovered hiding in an attic. After being tortured, he was beheaded, and his head impaled on a pike as a warning to other peasants. - Woodbridge and James, location 2683
- 4.4.3. In 1525 the princes and nobles crushed the revolt at a cost of an estimated 100,000 peasant lives. The surviving peasants considered Luther a false prophet. Many of them returned to Catholicism or turned to more radical forms of the Reformation. - Shelley, location 4518
- 4.4.4. When he first read the Twelve Articles, he addressed the princes, telling them that what was demanded of them in the articles was just, for the peasants were sorely oppressed. But when the uprising broke out, and the peasants took up arms, Luther tried to persuade them to follow a more peaceful course, and finally called on the princes to suppress the movement. Later, when the rebellion was drowned in blood, he urged the victorious princes to be merciful. But his words were not heeded, and it is said that more than a hundred thousand peasants were killed. - Gonzales, location 749
- 4.4.5. Unrest spread to Thuringia (part of eastern Germany). The peasants destroyed castles and monasteries and seized several towns. Amid reports of peasant atrocities, Luther exploded with another book, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, in which he infamously exhorted the landowners to "smite, slay and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful or devilish than a rebel." - Woodbridge and James, location 2709
- 4.4.6. Luther later admonished the landowners for their cruelty, and he urged clemency, but it was too little too late. Estimates are that more than 100,000 peasants were killed in the war. - Woodbridge and James, location 2712
- 4.5. The Peasants War had many long term effects. For one thing, many German peasants felt Luther had betrayed them and returned to Roman Catholicism or moved to the more Radical Anabaptist sects. It also hardened the positions of Roman Catholic princes and leaders throughout Europe who feared that the Reformation would inevitably lead to such events. Importantly, it strengthened the resolve of Charles V against Lutheranism. However, it tended to strengthen the resolve of the Protestant German princes. Finally, it created a long lasting effect on

Luther himself, who increasingly looked to secular authorities to maintain peace and order.

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- 4.5.3. Luther's conservative political and economic views arose from his belief that the equality of all men before God applied to spiritual not secular matters. While alienating the peasants, such views were a boon to alliances with the princes, many of whom became Lutheran in part because Luther's views allowed them to control the church in their territories, thereby strengthening their power and wealth. - Shelley, location 4525

5. Luther's Marriage to Katherina Von Bora

- 5.1. Luther had ended the demand for clerical celibacy upon his return to Wittenberg. Furthermore, he had even received a group of nuns who had converted to the Reformation and left their convent after reading Luther's *On Monastic Vows*. Eventually Luther arranged marriages for all of them except for one - the leader Katherina Von Bora. Eventually some of Luther's friends suggested he should marry Katie. At the same time Katie made it clear that there were only two men she would accept - one of whom was Luther. For his part Luther joked about the possibility, but he thought it unwise given that he was a wanted fugitive who might be martyred at any time. Eventually, however, he agreed to marry Katie, and they were wed on June 13, 1525, with a public reception two weeks later.
 - 5.1.1. Katie appears to have accepted her life until she and several nuns secretly read Luther's *On Monastic Vows* in 1522. The nuns embraced Luther's rejection of clerical celibacy and decided to abandon the cloistered life. - Woodbridge and James, location 2826
 - 5.1.2. Luther enlisted as a coconspirator Leonhard Koppe, who smuggled twelve nuns from the Nimbshen nunnery in empty herring barrels in April 1523. Koppe delivered nine to Luther's doorstep in Wittenberg. (Three nuns had returned to relatives.) - Woodbridge and James, location 2829
 - 5.1.3. Remarkably, he found husbands for all except Katie von Bora. Luther found not one, but two prospective husbands for her. The first, Hieronymus Baumgartner, under pressure from his family, married a richer bride; the second prospect, Dr. Kaspar Glatz, was rejected by Katie as too old. Katie took matters into her own hands and specifically suggested two other prospects — Luther or his friend Nicolaus von Amsdorf. - Woodbridge and James, location 2831
 - 5.1.4. Katie's timing was just right. Luther had begun to feel the loneliness of bachelorhood, and he expressed his willingness to "take pity" on poor Katie and marry her. The private ceremony took place on June 13, 1525, and a public celebration was held on June 27. It is clear that Luther married primarily as an act of theological defiance: "to spite the pope." - Woodbridge and James, location 2834

- 5.1.5.** Several of Luther’s friends suggested that he ought to marry. Katharina made it clear that there were only two men she would consider as potential husbands—and one of them was Dr. Luther. At first Luther joked about it. He was also reluctant to marry because at that point he believed that it was quite possible that he would soon have to die as a martyr. But eventually he agreed to marry Katharina. Although clearly shaped by the patriarchal attitudes of the time, their marriage was quite happy. - Gonzales, location 761
- 5.2.** Luther’s initial approach to marriage was far from romantic. He even said that one of his main reasons for marrying was “to spite the Pope.” However, Luther soon found himself deeply in love with Katie. Luther expressed this love openly, saying “I love my Katie; yes, I love her more dearly than myself.” They enjoyed a feisty but very affectionate 21 year marriage, and had 6 children.
- 5.2.1.** It is clear that Luther married primarily as an act of theological defiance: “to spite the pope.” - Woodbridge and James, location 2834
- 5.2.2.** However, a remarkable thing happened after Luther married: he fell in love with his wife. Unlike other Reformers, Luther openly declared his love: “I love my Katie; yes, I love her more dearly than myself.” - Woodbridge and James, location 2838
- 5.2.3.** Luther and Katie enjoyed a feisty, vibrant, and deeply affectionate twenty-one-year marriage relationship that produced six children. - Woodbridge and James, location 2839
- 5.3.** Luther’s home life was a source of joy for him (most of the time!), and a great example for others. He spoke of his home as a little church, and he set the example for marriage, the love of a husband and wife, the importance of romance in love and marriage, the Christian raising of children, and the importance of hospitality (the famous Table Talks are notes by students who regularly ate at Luther’s table with his family). He set the ideal and model for German families for centuries, and also created the model for something new - the Pastor’s home and family life. The importance and radical nature of this can hardly be overstated. Nothing like it had existed for over 1,000 years in the West.
- 5.3.1.** They had six children, and they worked jointly at providing a home for them as well as for a number of orphans and students. Luther would say that his family was like a “small church,” and would rejoice in being part of it. Out of these experiences, and out of the life of the family, came the famous Table Talks that his students compiled and published and which are one of the best avenues for insight into him as a man. His efforts to educate his children as well as others have been cited as a forerunner of public education. Furthermore, Luther’s family life became the model that many devout Germans would follow for generations. - Gonzales, location 767
- 5.3.2.** it became the paradigm for a new Protestant understanding of marriage. Indeed, many scholars contend that Luther inaugurated a cultural paradigm shift in the very concept of marriage. - Woodbridge and James, location 2842
- 5.3.3.** For centuries marriage had been entangled with dowries and social status. In fact, the essential criteria for a good marriage match had centered on the amount of the dowry and the enhanced social status of marrying into a socially prominent family. Luther’s marriage changed all that. - Woodbridge and James, location 2843

- 5.3.4. But Luther's outspoken affection for his wife became the new criteria for a good marriage. Luther's marriage reconfigured the reason for marriage from a consideration of dowry and social status to mutual affection. From that point on, social historians have noted that European cultures embrace love as the essential component for a happy marriage. - Woodbridge and James, location 2846
- 5.3.5. For more than a millennium, celibacy had been the ideal of the Christian life. Augustine argued that sex, even in marriage, inevitably involved sin. Jerome ranked celibacy above widowhood, and to him, both existed on a higher spiritual plane than marriage. Luther and Katie changed that valuation for the modern world. - Woodbridge and James, location 2851

6. The Early Years of Lutheranism

- 6.1. During all of this, Luther was still an outlaw under the edict of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire. However, the international scene allowed Luther to remain free and for his followers to band together. The main issues concerned the ongoing struggle between Charles the Holy Roman Emperor and Francis, the King of France, and the Pope. During this time the Imperial Diet had adopted a stance of tolerance toward Lutheranism (as it was becoming known), despite the protests of both the Emperor and the Pope. Furthermore, in 1526, with Charles' attention engaged elsewhere, the Second Diet of Spire formally withdrew the Edict of Worms, and allowed each German state to choose its own 'religion' - either Roman Catholicism or Lutheranism.
 - 6.1.1. When the Imperial Diet met again at Nuremberg, in 1523, it adopted a policy of tolerance toward Lutheranism, in spite of the protests of the legates of both pope and emperor. - Gonzales, location 795
 - 6.1.2. In 1526, when Charles was engaged in his struggles with Francis I of France and Pope Clement VII, the Diet of Spire formally withdrew the Edict of Worms, and granted each of the many German states the freedom to choose its own religious allegiance. - Gonzales, location 797
 - 6.1.3. First, the German princes were committed to maintaining political power within their realms, regardless of the emperor's policy. - Woodbridge and James, location 2729
 - 6.1.4. This political self-aggrandizement served the Reformation well. Throughout the early period of the Reformation, political opportunities trumped support for traditional Catholic religion. - Woodbridge and James, location 2729
 - 6.1.5. Second, the constantly challenging and shifting alliances between the empire, France, and the papacy kept Charles distracted from what appeared to be a minor squabble among monks in Saxony. - Woodbridge and James, location 2731
 - 6.1.6. Third, the Turkish threat of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–66) on the eastern borders of the empire sent chills down Charles's spine... He destroyed the Hungarians at the battle of Mohacs in 1526 and laid siege to Vienna in 1529. Vienna, the gateway to the Holy Roman Empire, may very well have fallen if Turkish supply lines had not been overstretched. - Woodbridge and James, location 2736
 - 6.1.7. As fate would have it, the year 1526 was a bad year for the empire. Turkish armies had invaded Hungary, and Pope Clement VII had joined forces with

Francis I of France to wage war against Charles V. When the issue of religion came to the fore, the participants realized the military maelstrom that threatened the empire made it impossible to enforce the Edict of Worms and bring Luther to justice. In the light of the practical realities of the situation, it was agreed by Catholics and evangelicals alike at the Diet of Speyer (1526) that each territorial prince would decide the religious issue on his own. This was music to the ears of the evangelicals, who seized on the compromise to move full speed ahead with religious reform in their territories. - Woodbridge and James, location 2748

- 6.2.** In 1529, the German Diet met at Spire again, but it reversed course, reinstating the Edict of Worms! This led to a formal protest by the Lutheran princes, who then became known as Protestants.
- 6.2.1.** In 1529, the Second Diet of Spire took a different tack. At that point there was renewed threat of imperial intervention, and princes who until then had been fairly moderate joined the ranks of the staunch Catholics. The result was that the Edict of Worms was reaffirmed. This prompted the Lutheran princes to present a formal protest, thus receiving the name of “Protestants.” - Gonzales, location 800
- 6.2.2.** The diet returned to Speyer in 1529, but the political landscape had changed yet again. Charles V had been victorious over Francis I, and his troops savagely sacked Rome, forcing Pope Clement VII to take refuge in the castle San Angelo. With the pope firmly under the control of the emperor, Archduke Ferdinand, again presiding over the diet, tried to regain the imperial upper hand on the religious issue and demanded that the 1526 agreement be nullified. The goal was the religious reunification of the empire as a Catholic nation. The Lutheran princes were defiant and issued a protestatio (protestation) against this abrupt turn, arguing that they were bound by the agreement of 1526. - Woodbridge and James, location 2754
- 6.2.3.** These “protests” by the Lutheran princes and the imperial cities at the Diet of Speyer mark the historical origins of the term “Protestant” as well as the religio-political division in Germany. - Woodbridge and James, location 2760
- 6.3.** Having crushed Pope Clement and Francis in battle in 1529, Charles was able to turn his attention to the problem in Germany. He came to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 - the first time he had been in Germany since the Diet of Worms in 1521. At Augsburg the Lutheran’s, represented by Melanchthon, put forward a statement of faith. This statement of faith, penned by Melanchthon, became known as the Augsburg Confession, and it became the basis of Lutheran doctrine. Because it was written the mild mannered Melanchthon the confession was actually an attempt to reconcile - but without giving up the essentials of the Lutheran faith. However, Charles did not really listen, but simply appointed Johann Eck of Ingolstadt - who had debated with Luther at Leipzig in 1519 - to write a refutation. When this was presented to the Diet a few weeks later, Charles did not even give the Lutherans a chance to respond, but simply demanded that they recant their own statement. Melanchthon managed to create a quick written reply, but Charles refused to even read or consider it. The Lutherans must simply recant. When the Lutherans refused to recant Charles became enraged and said they had until April 1531 to recant or they would face the consequences.

- 6.3.1. Charles V finally returned to Germany in 1530, in order to attend the Diet of Augsburg. At Worms, the emperor had refused to listen to Luther's arguments. But now, in view of the turn of events, he requested an orderly exposition of the points at issue. This document, whose main author was Philipp Melanchthon, is now known as the Augsburg Confession—and for a long time Lutherans commonly referred to themselves as “Christians of the Augsburg Confession.” - Gonzales, location 803
- 6.3.2. The defiant protestations of the Lutheran princes prompted Charles V to turn his personal attention to the religious question in Germany once again at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. He returned to Germany for the first time since the Diet of Worms in 1521 to bring the full weight of his imperial majesty to this nagging matter. - Woodbridge and James, location 2762
- 6.3.3. Charles had requested that the Protestants present a statement of their beliefs at the diet. Melanchthon, with Luther's consent and advice, produced the famous Augsburg Confession for the emperor. - Woodbridge and James, location 2766
- 6.3.4. It was a clear attempt at reconciliation without giving up the essentials of the Lutheran faith — all in an effort to maintain peace in the empire. - Woodbridge and James, location 2770
- 6.3.5. By 1530, when a summit conference of Reformation leaders convened in Augsburg to draw up a common statement of faith, leadership of the movement had begun to pass out of Luther's hands. The Reformer was still an outlaw and unable to attend. - Shelley, location 4529
- 6.3.6. The task of presenting Lutheranism fell to a young professor of Greek at Wittenberg—Philip Melanchthon. The young scholar drafted the Augsburg Confession signed by Lutheran princes and theologians, but the emperor was no more inclined to conciliation than he had been at Worms. - Shelley, location 4530
- 6.3.7. After hearing the Confession on June 25, 1530, Charles appointed Johann Eck of Ingolstadt and others to provide a Confutatio, which was presented on August 3. Charles then demanded that the Protestants acknowledge they had been refuted, without having had opportunity to interact with their detractors. Melanchthon hastily managed to compose an Apology (a defense of the Confession), but Charles refused to receive it. - Woodbridge and James, location 2771
- 6.3.8. When the signatories of the Augsburg Confession refused to abandon their faith, the emperor was enraged and ordered that they must recant by April of the following year, or suffer the consequences. - Gonzales, location 809
- 6.3.9. Augsburg was a defining moment in the history of the Reformation, for now it was absolutely clear that the emperor was unwilling to engage serious religious debate. Moreover, the Protestant princes for their part were unwilling to capitulate to a foreign emperor. Augsburg signaled that the religious divide was now unbridgeable, and the parties began to prepare for a possible war. - Woodbridge and James, location 2775
- 6.4. At this point, the Protestant princes decided to form into a united league to resist the Emperor and prepare for war. This was known as the Schmalkald League. Luther had always been totally against armed resistance of authority, but reluctantly agreed it must be done at this point. Just as both sides prepared for war, however,

international events again intervened. Francis again prepared for war with Charles, and the Turks were again threatening in the East. Needing a united Germany to withstand these problems, Charles postponed actions, and the peace of Nuremberg, which allowed Protestants to practice their faith but not to attempt to extend it to new territories, was signed in 1532.

- 6.4.1.** The Protestant princes decided that their only hope was to offer a common front. After long hesitation, Luther agreed that it was licit to take up arms in self-defense against the emperor. - Gonzales, location 812
- 6.4.2.** Within months, the Protestant princes formed the Schmalkald League — a defensive alliance led by John Frederick of electoral Saxony and Philip of Hesse. - Woodbridge and James, location 2777
- 6.4.3.** Luther had long been on the record opposing any active resistance to the authorities, as he had in the Peasants War; but when his movement was threatened, he reluctantly conceded that armed resistance to the emperor was justifiable in order to defend the gospel. - Woodbridge and James, location 2780
- 6.4.4.** Both sides were making ready for long and cruel war when international events once more forced Charles to postpone action. Francis of France was again preparing for war, and the Turks were planning to avenge their earlier failure at the walls of Vienna. To counteract such powerful enemies, Charles needed a united Germany. These circumstances demanded negotiation rather than war, and finally Protestants and Catholics agreed to the Peace of Nuremberg, signed in 1532. This stipulated that Protestants would be allowed to practice their faith, but could not seek to extend it to other territories. - Gonzales, location 819
- 6.4.5.** Just when a war seemed inevitable, the Turks renewed their attacks on the eastern border of the empire, and Charles judged that the time was not right for a military solution to the religious problem in Germany. Charles was forced to grant formal religious toleration for more than a decade in exchange for military and financial support from the Protestant princes in his war against the Turks. - Woodbridge and James, location 2781
- 6.5.** However, Protestantism continue to spread into new territories. Eventually, even the archbishop of Cologne converted to Protestantism! Then in 1546 the elector of the Palitnate converted as well - giving Protestants a 4-3 majority among the electors. If Charles were to die, they would elect a Protestant as the Holy roman Emperor! Charles could not allow this, so he went to war against them in 1546 a few months after Luther's death. Through a variety of intrigues he got some Protestants to side with him and he defeated the rest in April 1547. He set up a temporary agreement, but political intrigues soon turned against Charles, and he himself was defeated in battle in 1552. Eventually the reality that Germany was hopelessly religiously divided and would never simply return to the Roman Catholic fold settled in. A new peace of Augsburg was signed in 1555 and the official policy became that whatever the faith of the emperor, so the faith of the state. This guided Germany into the future.
 - 6.5.1.** Once more, political circumstances favored Protestantism, for it continued advancing into new territories in spite of the agreement of Nuremberg. - Gonzales, location 825

- 6.5.2.** It must have seemed to Charles that the longer he postponed military action, the more entrenched Lutheranism became. In 1543 the archbishop of Cologne embraced Protestantism, and in 1546 the elector of the Palatinate converted to the Reformed faith. This had clear political implications: Now the Protestants had a four-to-three majority among the imperial electors (Saxony, Brandenburg, Palatinate, and the archbishop of Cologne) over the Catholic electors (the king of Bohemia and the archbishops of Trier and Mainz). If Charles were to die, this majority of electors would determine the next emperor. - Woodbridge and James, location 2790
- 6.5.3.** With France subdued for the moment, he secured financial support from Rome. Further, he was able to bribe Duke Moritz of Albertine Saxony with the promise of an elector's title if he would betray his prince (John Fredrick, elector of Saxony). - Woodbridge and James, location 2795
- 6.5.4.** Philip of Hesse had entered into a bigamous marriage, putting his throne at risk and thus making him vulnerable to imperial pressure. Philip reluctantly agreed to remain neutral if the emperor attacked the Schmalkald League. Philip's complicity exposed the league militarily and was especially disheartening, in view of the fact that Philip was one of the primary leaders of the Schmalkald League. Above all, Luther's death in February 1546 left the Protestants in mourning and unprepared for war. - Woodbridge and James, location 2797
- 6.5.5.** Charles launched the so-called "Schmalkald War" with his assault on the Protestant princes in July 1546. - Woodbridge and James, location 2801
- 6.5.6.** the decisive coup de grâce was delivered to the Protestants at the battle of Mühlberg (April 24, 1547). - Woodbridge and James, location 2802
- 6.5.7.** Charles imposed the Augsburg Interim as a temporary religious solution until the Council of Trent reconvened. - Woodbridge and James, location 2804
- 6.5.8.** But Protestant leaders in Magdeburg denounced the interim as the work of the Devil and produced the first Protestant justification for active resistance to ungodly state authority. In the final analysis, the interim failed. - Woodbridge and James, location 2806
- 6.5.9.** Elector Moritz soon betrayed the emperor. Enlisting the secret support of Henry II of France, in 1552 Moritz rallied Protestant princes and launched a surprise attack on Catholics, forcing Charles to flee across the Alps. An uneasy stalemate between Protestants and Catholics held sway until the Diet of Augsburg in 1555. The political realities of the past decade had demonstrated that Germany was irrevocably divided. - Woodbridge and James, location 2808
- 6.5.10.** Charles now accepted the realization that the religious settlement within any given territory would be decided, not by the emperor, but by the territorial prince. The principle of cuius regio, eius religio ("the ruler determines the religion") became political reality. The Peace of Augsburg now recognized two legal religions in the empire: Lutheran and Catholic. This legalization did not extend to the Reformed branch of Protestantism or Anabaptists. The settlement was not a triumph for toleration, but for political pragmatism. - Woodbridge and James, location 2811

7. Luther's Theology

7.1. Sola Scriptura - the Centrality of Scripture

7.1.1. In contrast to the belief and practice of Roman Catholicism, for Luther Scripture, not tradition and the church hierarchy, was central. Scripture - not the Pope or councils - had the final say.

7.1.2. In practice this meant that practices without warrant in Scripture - which was much of the life and practice of the RCC at this time - should not be imposed on the church. Furthermore, the Pope could not simply declare them to be binding by his word. In fact, the Pope had no real authority, for the Papacy was not found in Scripture.

7.1.3. Furthermore, this belief had the effect of elevating the importance of the preaching of the Word in the worship and life of the church. In many ways, the high point of Protestant worship shifted from the eucharist to the preaching of the Word.

7.2. Sola Fide - justification by faith alone

7.2.1. This was of course the original insight that had sparked Luther's problems with practices such as indulgences. Luther correctly saw that Scripture teaches that we are justified - declared righteous by God - because of faith alone. The RCC had taught we were saved by grace through faith - but not faith alone. Faith was necessary but not sufficient. Luther correctly taught faith was not only necessary - it was sufficient. To add works nullified the Gospel.

7.2.2. In practice this negated the whole system of penance, indulgences, and other means of receiving justifying grace. One was justified because of faith alone - nothing else was needed.

7.3. Imputation

7.3.1. At the heart of the Gospel for Luther was the doctrine of imputation. Just as we were guilty and polluted by the sin of Adam, so we were declared righteous and made clean by the righteousness of Christ.

7.3.2. Justification is thus not a "legal fiction" - Christ's real righteousness is actually credited to and placed upon the believer. Thus, the believer has the perfect righteousness of Christ, and consequently the works of a believer can do nothing to add to their standing before God - for they already have the same standing as Jesus, because His works and righteousness are theirs through imputation.

7.4. Law and Gospel

7.4.1. Luther taught that when one reads Scripture you must distinguish between the Law and the Gospel. This was not the OT and NT - both of those contain Law and both contain Gospel. Rather, it is recognizing the difference between what God is commanding, and what God promises and gives. The commands of God are His Law - and therefore do not justify, nor do they empower us to obey. What God promises in grace is the Gospel - and this is what is received in faith and what justifies, and also what gives power to grow in holiness.

7.4.2. Once again, this undermined the whole system of salvation by works. Salvation by works misreads the law as if it is the Gospel - and thereby actually distorts and destroys the true Gospel.

- 7.5. Faith towards God and love towards neighbor
 - 7.5.1. See the Freedom of the Christian Man
 - 7.5.2. We exercise faith towards God, because our works are useless in establishing or maintaining a relationship with God. We exercise love towards our neighbor because God does not need our good works; our neighbor does.
 - 7.5.3. Thus faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6) was not what Thomas Aquinas and the RCC had claimed, because the works of love flowed from faith which had already justified the believer, and played no part in justification. Good works were thus freed to serve our neighbors in all kinds of practical ways.
 - 7.5.4. This also led to Luther's robust doctrine of vocation. All Christians had a vocation - not just the clergy. Vocation was the various callings of God in life - our marriage and family, our labor, our service in the church, our callings as citizens. Our good works done in our vocations were how God served our neighbor through us.
- 7.6. Theology of Cross and Theology of Glory
 - 7.6.1. Luther taught there were two approaches to Christian theology and life. A theology of glory tries to climb the ladder to God. The theology of glory seeks to know "the naked God" - ignoring the infinite distance between God and the creature. The reality, however, is far different. For God has revealed Himself in the cross of Christ. God is seen in the weakness and suffering of the cross.
 - 7.6.2. This also worked out in what should be expected in the Christian life. Not only many Catholics, but also the Anabaptists had a theology of glory. For many Anabaptists it led to overestimating how much they heard from God. It also led to a belief that sin could be conquered now. In essence it promised too much both in term of how much we could know of God, and how much freedom from sin and eternal glory we could experience now. On the other hand, the theology of the cross says that this life is still "seeing in a mirror dimly" and of continued struggle with sin and suffering.
- 7.7. The Sacraments
 - 7.7.1. Luther recognized that the NT only speaks of two sacraments: water baptism and the Lord's Supper. This obviously undermined the whole sacramental system of the RCC. In RC theology, grace was entirely tied to the whole system of sacraments, and if one did not use all of the different sacraments, they were left apart from grace.
 - 7.7.2. Luther's doctrine of water baptism did not change much. He continued to believe and practice infant baptism, and did not even change the underlying theology a great deal.
 - 7.7.3. Luther did not agree with the doctrine of transubstantiation. However, he continued to believe that Christ was really and truly physically present in the meal. This view has often been called "consubstantiation" though Luther never used the term. He taught that Christ's physical body and blood were present in, with, and under the actual elements of bread and wine. This view was immensely important with Luther - even though it was the only point of disagreement with Zwingli, he would not unite with them because of it.
 - 7.7.4. However, Luther rejected any idea that the meal was a re-sacrifice of Christ, or to assign any idea of it working ex opere operato. For Luther, God's promises and gifts were received always and only by faith.

7.8. The Two Kingdoms

7.8.1. Luther revived the Two Kingdoms teaching of Augustine and even carried it forward in some ways. The kingdom of man, the civil state, was the realm of the Law, while the Kingdom of God, the church, was the realm of the Gospel. The state must operate under the law, and its main purpose is to set limits to human sin and its consequences. As such, Christian should not expect the civil government to be ruled by the Gospel, nor to support orthodoxy by persecuting heretics. In fact, Luther said an unbeliever - even a Turk (Muslim) - might be a better ruler in the civil realm.

7.8.2. This idea began the move towards a separation of church and state. The state should not be looked to as how the faith would be propagated. This would be done as the Word went forth.

7.8.3. In practice, however, the close relationship between church and state continued. It had been over 1,000 years since the time of Constantine, and changes to this system were slow to come.

8. The Dark Side of Luther

8.1. As we saw above, Luther's words and actions were often noble, but there was a dark side as well. His strong words in the Peasants Revolt led to the slaughter of many peasants. Luther had not intended this, but his heated rhetoric got away from him at times and could lead to tragic consequences.

8.2. Furthermore, Luther sometimes taught one thing at one point and then began to teach or act in a contrary manner later. For example, Luther said the state should not persecute heretics, but his words against the Anabaptists were very harsh, and he sometimes supported their suppression.

8.3. Luther also supported a bigamous marriage by Philip the landgrave of Hesse. Philip, landgrave of Hesse, not only was one of the first princes to ally with the Lutheran cause, but was also the architect of the Schmalkald League, a defensive alliance of princes who supported the Protestant movement. Only the electors of Saxony were more strategically important than Philip of Hesse. So it was a very delicate matter when Philip sought Luther's support for a bigamous marriage. His newfound evangelical faith seems to have troubled his conscience somewhat, and while he continued the affairs, he declined to partake of Communion for fifteen years. Then he met and fell deeply in love with a beautiful young noblewoman from his court, Margaret van der Saal. At first he sought to make her his mistress, but her mother refused and insisted on marriage or nothing. Divorce was out of the question, and that left only bigamy. Interestingly, Philip did not pursue this course of action without consulting with his wife, who actually agreed to the bigamous marriage as long as her offspring were designated rightful heirs. Philip was not unaware that some of the Old Testament patriarchs had more than one wife and, in keeping with the Protestant stress on the authority of Scripture, convinced himself that his case for bigamy had biblical precedent. Luther had argued years earlier, regarding Henry VIII and Queen Catherine of Aragon, that bigamy was preferable to divorce. Luther fatefully approved the bigamous marriage, partly out of concern for Philip's troubled conscience and partly out of political expediency. It was a decision that would cost many lives and nearly destroy Lutheranism itself. Luther urged Philip to keep the second marriage secret, but such things rarely succeed. Bigamy, it turns out, was

against imperial law, which meant that Philip was vulnerable to his archnemesis — Emperor Charles V. In order to keep his title and domain, Philip was compelled to sign a nonaggression pact with Charles V. Six years later, when the time was right, Charles would launch a surprise attack against the Lutheran princes and the Schmalkald League while Philip, the most powerful member, remained neutral. The results were catastrophic. Whatever the judgment on this matter, Luther failed both as a moral leader and as a political strategist. By supporting Philip, Luther jeopardized the very movement he sought to preserve. - Woodbridge and James, location 2887-2909

- 8.4.** Initially, Luther had been very kind to the Jewish population of Germany, many of whom had suffered for years. Luther thought that once they understood the Gospel they would convert. However, this did not happen, and over time Luther changed his views. Near the end of his life, in 1543, he wrote a disastrous tract entitled *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he urged Germans to burn Jewish synagogues, schools, and homes, to destroy all Jewish writings, and to prevent rabbis from teaching on penalty of death. Furthermore, he advocated that Jews be enslaved to the German people. All of this was used as justification by the Nazis for their terrible policies centuries later. Luther, who had begun as notably pro-Jewish unfortunately is now remembered as laying the groundwork for the most virulent anti-Semitism. In some ways this is unfair, as Luther was really not doing any of this for racial reasons - but that is really cold comfort. The simple fact is this writing of Luther was horrific. It should have never been written (and his friends had urged him not to write it.) It is the darkest chapter in an often glorious life and story.

9. Closing - The Incredible Effect of Luther

- 9.1.** It is hard to overstate the importance of Luther in history. He is the foundation of the modern German language, gave Germany her bible, her liturgy, her hymnody, her catechism, and her prayers. No other Reformer even comes close to having such an effect in their own country.
- 9.2.** Luther also had an incredible effect on Western civilization. Modern notions of freedom, separation of church and state, the value of 'secular' work (vocations), the rights of individual conscience, the importance of romantic love in marriage and the Christian home, etc. all find roots in Luther. Furthermore, it was in regions who followed him that care for the poor shifted from monks and the church to society at large, and education became much more widespread as it became important for children to be taught to read the Scripture. In many ways, it is hard to imagine the modern Western world apart from Luther.
- 9.3.** Luther paved the way for the Reformation. Under God, it was he who recovered the Gospel, and set the path to Reformation. This has swept hundreds of millions into the Kingdom of God. Before Luther the Gospel was obscured and all but lost. After him, it blazed forth around the globe.
- 9.4.** In many ways all modern Bible translations trace back to Luther. He was the first translation from the Greek and Hebrew into the vernacular in almost 1,000 years in the West. Furthermore, this not only gave the idea to others, but his translation was consulted by others as they translated the Scripture into their own languages.

- 9.5. Luther was clearly a flawed man - like us all. But all of us owe a deep debt of gratitude to this man who stood for God's truth in his own day and paved the way for us to do the same in our own.

Next Class: Ulrich Zwingli and the "German" Swiss Reformation

Reading: Chapter 5 - Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation

Date: May 27????