

# I. Martin Luther 1483-1546<sup>1</sup>

Luther is a pivotal figure in world history.

Luther is a fascinating personality.

He was a most deliciously transparent personality.

Therefore, he is one of the top ten most-biographed men in history. Jan Hus predicted his coming.

In 1414, while imprisoned by the Council of Constance and anticipating his execution by burning for heresy, Hus, whose name meant grey goose, prophesied, "Now they will roast a goose, but in a hundred years' time they'll hear a swan sing. They'd better listen to him." (Luther published his *Ninety-five Theses* some 103 years later).

For this reason many Lutheran churches today have a painting or sculpture of a swan somewhere in the church. Luther celebrated his Christian liberty.

Luther enjoyed beer and wine as God's good gifts. He had a mug with three rings. The first, he said, represented the Ten Commandments, the second the Apostles' Creed, and the third the Lord's Prayer. Luther could drain the mug of wine through the Lord's Prayer though a friend could not get beyond the Ten Commandments. But Luther is never recorded to have gotten drunk.

**Luther Monument in Worms.**

## **A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CHANGE**

He was 9 when Columbus discovered the New World

He was 15 when Savonarola died.

He was about 40 when Magellan circumnavigated the world.

## **B. HIS BIOGRAPHY**

### **1. Birth & Family**

Born in 1483 to **Hans and Margrethe Luder.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Items highlighted in red were markers for PowerPoint slides

## ***2. Education:***

1501-05 B.A. & M.A at U. of Erfurt. The degrees were in law.

## ***3. Monastic Life***

Luther lived under an unhealthy fear of God & scrupulous conscience.

In 1505 travelling home to his parents, he entered a thunderstorm that provoked terror. In total desperation he cried out to St. Anne, the patron saint of miners: *"Help me, St. Anne, and I will become a monk."* The date was July 2, 1505.

Exactly two weeks later, Luther threw a party for his classmates, giving them his law books and his master's cap and withdrawing from his doctoral studies. Then he told them that on the following day he would enter the monastery.<sup>2</sup>

His parents were furious.

His spiritual advisor was a wise man named Staupitz.

Luther had tremendous anxiety about his sin.

### ***C. WITTENBERG***

Looking to cure Luther's scruples, he ordered him to study theology, and sent him to the U. of Wittenberg.

It was Frederick the Wise' new University. Luther wasn't burnt at the stake because Frederick the Wise protected him.

1509 B.A in Bible

1510 Staupitz sent him to Rome, but this experience deeply grieved Luther. It soured on the RC hierarchy, and it did not help Luther's scruples.

After Rome, Luther met up with Staupitz in the garden at the Wittenberg cloister. Staupitz did not understand why Luther could not comprehend God's love for him. "Love God?" Luther retorted, "I can't love God, I hate him."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Stephen J. Nichols. Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought (Kindle Locations 163-166). Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen J. Nichols. Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought (Kindle Locations 191-192). Kindle Edition.

1512 PhD in Theology and Joined the faculty at U. of Wittenberg.

1513-17 Lectured through Psalms, Galatians, Hebrews, and Romans.

During this time, we don't exactly know when, Luther saw Justification by faith alone. Here is how he describes it in his preface to his Commentary on the Psalms.

“Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scripture from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God. And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word “righteousness of God.” Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.”<sup>4</sup>

During this period, in 1516, when Luther was 34, Brother Tetzl came to a neighboring town selling indulgences to raise money to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

“When into the coffer a coin rings, a soul from purgatory springs.”

#### ***D. REFORMATION***

**Oct 31, 1517** Luther nailed his **95 Thesis** to the Wittenberg church door. The reaction was immediate and totally unexpected.

The reaction forced Luther to defend his understanding of grace, and take its ultimate implications—the destruction of the entire RC edifice of works righteousness.

**1518** Heidelberg Disputation. The 95 theses about indulgences evolved into 28 theses arguing a full orb'd Augustinian theology of sovereign grace.

---

Sproul, R.C.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Beeke, Joel R.; Calhoun, David B.; Denlinger, Aaron Clay; Ferguson, Sinclair B.; Godfrey, W. Robert; Horton, Michael S.; Lawson, Steven J.; Lucas, Sean Michael; MacArthur, John; Manetsch, Scott M.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Thomas, Derek W.H.; Veith, Gene Edward; Waters, Guy Prentiss; Yount, Terry. The Legacy of Luther . Ligonier Ministries, Inc. - USA. Kindle Edition.

At the Heidelberg Disputations, for the first time, he argued “*The Theology of the Cross.*” Vs the “*Theology of Glory.*”

*What did Luther mean by a Theology of Glory?* He didn’t mean the glory of God. He meant the glory of man. The definition contains four propositions.

1. God’s standard aren’t that high.
2. Man is basically good. Sins not sin is his problem. Thomas Aquinas: Reason is not fallen.
3. We can find God through human effort—philosophy, or reason, i.e. we can earn God’s favor.
4. It is all about human self-actualization.

By contrast, the *Theology of The Cross* is about human bankruptcy and God’s glory.

1. God’s standards are perfection.
2. Man is dead in trespasses and sins.
3. We can’t find God through human effort. God must find us.
4. It is all about the glory of God.

Here are some summary descriptions of the Theology of Glory.

Luther’s *Theology of the Cross* emphasized the hiddenness of God. God reveals himself and God hides himself. *No one can know God unless God unveils himself.* Where does God unveil himself? According to Luther, God unveils himself at the cross. This was also Paul’s understanding.

(1 Cor 1:18) “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God.”

Bainton: “God hides his power in weakness. God hides his wisdom in folly. God hides his goodness in severity. God hides his justice in sins. God hides his mercy in His wrath.” *Martin Luther*, pg. 63

Here is how church historian, Stephen Nichols, sums up Luther’s Theology of the Cross.

“In light of Christ on the cross, any trust in human ability becomes comes sheer folly. Any attempt to reach God through philosophical speculation also

becomes futile. As Luther, reflecting on 1 Corinthians notes, through the foolishness of the cross, "God destroys the wisdom of the wise." [By contrast] The theology of glory celebrates works and what humanity can do; the theology of the cross celebrates Christ and what he alone can accomplish."<sup>5</sup>

Naturally, Luther's Theology of the Cross led to persecution.

### ***E. THE DIET OF WORMS***

Jan 1521 the Roman Church excommunicated him.

Pope Leo the 10<sup>th</sup> ordered Luther to come to Rome to stand trial. Frederick the Wise, Luther's protector, simply refused to send him. Luther was a German citizen, and he would face his accusers on German soil.

Instead, the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Emperor met at Worms on German soil, and Luther was offered safe passage to come and explain his new theology.

Sproul: Luther arrived at Worms on April 16 to cheering crowds, excluding the papal authorities. On April 17, Luther appeared before the diet. In front of Luther was a large table, upon which was spread out a collection of his writings. The presiding officials demanded only two things: Luther's confession that he was the author of these books and his recantation of their contents. Luther was caught off guard. He had been promised safe passage and he expected a debate. Now, he realized he would get neither.

He hesitated and asked for a day to consider his reply. The night of April 17, 1521, was passed in prayer. As with the vigils he kept as a monk, Luther prayed through a struggle. But unlike those previous vigils, this one was not followed by crushing anxiety and the throes of *Anfechtungen*. Luther instead emerged from his chamber and took the steps to his place before the diet in confidence and security and peace.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Stephen J. Nichols. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (Kindle Locations 583-586). Kindle Edition.

<sup>6</sup> Sproul, R.C.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Beeke, Joel R.; Calhoun, David B.; Denlinger, Aaron Clay; Ferguson, Sinclair B.; Godfrey, W. Robert; Horton, Michael S.; Lawson, Steven J.; Lucas, Sean Michael; MacArthur, John; Manetsch, Scott M.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Thomas, Derek W.H.; Veith, Gene Edward; Waters, Guy Prentiss; Yount, Terry. *The Legacy of Luther*. Ligonier Ministries, Inc. - USA. Kindle Edition.

The next day Luther stood before Emperor Charles V, and the human powers of Europe, at the Diet of Worms.

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Here I stand! Amen.”

He left alone in his little two wheeled cart expecting to be arrested and burnt at the stake. A few miles down the road, however, friends swooped out of the forest, blindfolded him and smuggled him away to the **Wartburg Castle**. He took the alias, **Junker George**, and grew a beard. They hid him for 300 days. During that time he translated the NT into German.

After 300 days, Luther emerged and re-assumed his lead role in the Reformation. This meant continuous theological battle.

#### ***F. BONDAGE OF THE WILL 1524-25***

The debate started with Erasmus' *Freedom of the Will* in 1524.

Define bondage/freedom of the will.

Luther responded with his book, the *Bondage of the Will* in 1525. He called *Bondage* his most important book and he called Erasmus' *Freedom...a pile of [shit] on a silver platter*.

He thanked Erasmus that he had gone after the real thing, the central issue. Erasmus hadn't wearied him with a debate about indulgences, or masses, or sacraments, or the Pope, or purgatory, but instead he had brought up the central issue of the Reformation—the debilitating effect of sin and the glory of sovereign grace. Erasmus alone, Luther wrote, hit the nail on the head.

#### ***G. HIS MARRIAGE TO KATIE***

In the midst of his battle with Erasmus, Luther married. He was age 42. He hadn't married because he assumed he would be burnt at the stake.

The story—**Katharina Von Bora** and the Herring Barrels.

He proposed and two weeks later they married.

Luther's wedding elevated the Medieval view of marriage. It had been second fiddle to celibacy. Luther and Katy made marriage, not celibacy, the desired spiritual state.

Their marriage became the standard to which German marriages measured themselves for the next 400 years.

Katie was the ideal helpmate. She was an industrious, frugal, business minded Proverbs thirty-one woman. She brought Martin "good and not harm all the days of his life" (Proverbs 31:12). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a household of this size, often twenty-five or more, required many servants. All of this Katie oversaw and managed with great skill, leaving Martin free to pursue his theological studies and voluminous writing. In addition, she brewed the family beer, managed a pond from which she netted trout, carp, pike, and perch, maintained their orchard, took care of their livestock, (slaughtering them herself), and homeschooled their children. One biographer wrote, "Kate became gardener, fisher, brewer, fruit grower, cattle and horse breeder, cook, bee-keeper, provisioner, nurse, and vintner. In 1542, for example, the Luther's had five cows, nine calves, one goat, two kids, eight pigs, two sows, and three piglets."<sup>i</sup>

Martin's favorite book of the Bible was Galatians. So deep did his love for Katie grow that he nicknamed it his Katherine von Bora. He depended upon her. They were a team. There is an old saying: behind every successful man is a capable and supportive wife. That was Katie. Martin's literary output during this time was herculean. Little of it would have occurred without Katie von Bora.

They had six Children. Only four survived them.

#### ***H. HIS WEAKNESSES***

- Asceticism. Gave his royalties away.
- Temper with Zwingli. "Hoc Est Corpus Meum."
- Rejected the Book of James, "An Epistle of Straw."
- Bigamy of Philip I, Landgrave.
- Diatribe against the Jews.

## ***I. HIS INFLUENCE***

- The Bible is the ultimate Authority
- The inseparable connection between theology and morality.
- The centrality of the Cross.
- His clear understanding that sin, not sins, is the problem.
- The first to understand and use the Media as a tool for social and spiritual revolution.

“By the end of 1522...Luther had published some 160 different writings. About a third of these were in Latin, and these [Latin] texts were important for...they persuaded clerical colleagues to join his crusade for a reformed Christianity and played a vital role in the success of his movement... By the end of 1522, his German works had been published in 828 editions. The next eight years would see the publication of some 1,245 more, an estimated total of some two million copies...The production, sale, and distribution of these books was a mammoth undertaking. In the process Luther and his friends had recast both the German publishing industry and the reading public.<sup>7</sup>

- Liberty of Conscience
- Great men come in earthen vessels.

Luther’s strengths—courage, conviction, decisiveness, impatience with error—when dealing with others—were also his weakness.

## ***J. RESOURCES***

*Martin Luther*, Eric Metaxas

*Here I Stand*, Roland Bainton

*The Legacy of Martin Luther*, R. C. Sproul, et. Al.

*Brand Luther*, Andrew Pettegree

“Christian History Magazine,” 2 Issues on Luther, Free PDF Downloads.

*Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, Alister McGrath

---

<sup>7</sup> Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, (New York: Penguin 2015) pg. 143



*Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, Heiko Oberman

*The Bondage of the Will*, Luther

---

<sup>i</sup> Sproul, R.C.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Beeke, Joel R.; Calhoun, David B.; Denlinger, Aaron Clay; Ferguson, Sinclair B.; Godfrey, W. Robert; Horton, Michael S.; Lawson, Steven J.; Lucas, Sean Michael; MacArthur, John; Manetsch, Scott M.; Nichols, Stephen J.; Thomas, Derek W.H.; Veith, Gene Edward; Waters, Guy Prentiss; Yount, Terry. *The Legacy of Luther* (Kindle Locations 2069-2071). Ligonier Ministries, Inc. - USA. Kindle Edition.