

Martin Luther Monologue

My name is Martin Luther, and I am a monk of the Augustinian order (in Erfurt, Germany). Born in Eisleban, Saxony on Nov. 10, 1483. I have a few announcements I'd like to make.... 95, to be exact! Actually, I'm here to tell you a little bit about my story and how God used a fearful, insecure man like me to bring about the Protestant Reformation. I'm guessing that you may have not even heard about it, and if you did, you probably don't know what it is. That's why I'm here... to tell you the story.

Five hundred plus years ago, on October 31, 1517, I unwittingly started one of the greatest events in all of human history (the Protestant Reformation) by nailing my 95 theses (statements of objection) to the front door of the church in Wittenberg. This was not an uncommon practice. The church door was like the community bulletin board. It was sort of like their version of Facebook! People would post news, "want" ads, and topics for discussion. And, that's what I wanted... conversation!

What came of it was completely unexpected, but desperately needed. The conversation that was started on that day, 500 years ago, resulted in the Reformation of the Church. Today, most people think of that day as Halloween, but to me, that was the day that God saved the Church.

How did it happen? Good question! After 12 years of being the best religious monk that I could be, doing everything I could do to please God (i.e. praying from 4am until late into the evenings, confessing my sins to the priest for up to 6 hours at a time, and following all of the strict rules of the Augustinians), I grew exasperated, exhausted, and angry with God. **I viewed God as a tyrant because He demanded what I could not give.**

But, everything changed for me the day that I was reading in the book of Romans and I came to verse 17 in chapter 1. When I read that "the just shall live by faith," it changed my life! I love the Church, but the more I studied the scriptures, the more I realized and became incensed at the many errors the Church was putting forward to the common people, namely the selling of indulgences to purchase salvation with money, rather than to Christ, who has purchased salvation with His blood. **Their message was a false gospel of, "Confess your sins and WORK (to earn favor with God)!" But, I discovered in the book of Romans that the true gospel message is, "Confess your sins, and REST (in the finished work of Christ on our behalf)!"**

And so, I did it. I could not remain quiet. I found a hammer and a few nails, I wrote down 95 problems that I had with the Church, I nailed my writings on the front doors of the Whittenberg Church, declaring that salvation is obtained, NOT by our own righteousness and good works (we have none!), but by the righteousness and perfect work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, NOT BY WORKS BUT BY FAITH ALONE.

After several years of debate, discussion, and disagreement, the Roman Church declared me heretic and excommunicated from the church. I thought, for sure, that I would be burned at the stake. I was brought before a formal session in Worms, Germany (known as the Diet of Worms) where I was asked to “recant” of all of my writings.

I knew that an unwillingness to do so would likely result in execution, so I requested 24 hours to pray before I answered. When I returned the next day, my answer was this, ***“Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is held captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything. For to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”***

I was not executed, because as I was being transported off from the assembly, my friend, Friedrich the Wise, arranged for me to be kidnapped and hidden in the Wartburg Castle (Eisenach). To disguise myself (I guess you could call it my Halloween costume), I grew a beard and changed my name to Junker Jorge (Knight George)! It was in the Wartburg Castle that I translated the New Testament, from the original Greek into German, so that the common people could have access to the scriptures. This is still the most common translation used in Germany today.

As the Reformation of the Church began to spread throughout Germany and into Europe, Believers were liberated! Monks and Nuns began to marry and start families. I actually helped 12 Nuns escape their convent. I was able to reunite them with their parents or help them find husbands to marry... all but one, Katherina von Bura.

Ms. von Bura was the least desirable. She wasn’t altogether attractive and she was VERY opinionated. **After trying and trying to find her a husband and with no success, I decided to just marry her myself!** She became my cherished Katie. She was a great mother, an excellent cook, and made the best beer in Whittenberg (at least in my opinion)!

I'm humbled and amazed to have been used by God to reform the Church, and I guess the five things that would probably be my lasting legacy are:

1. Salvation is "by faith alone."
2. The Word of God is our highest authority, not the Pope or the Church.
3. The Bible is accessible to all people, and is understandable (like a mother talking to her child).
4. Congregational singing (**Doctrine engages the head. Singing engages the heart.**)
 - a. My most famous hymn is "A Mighty Fortress (Is Our God)." I wrote it as I was helping so many who were sick and dying from the Black Plague in Whittenberg. As I wrote, I couldn't help but reflect on Psalm 46 (*"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear. The LORD Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. – Psalm 46:1, 11)*) and my time hidden in the safety of the Wartburg Castle and its impenetrable walls and strong tower.
5. The priesthood of all believers. Everyone is a minister and is called into ministry wherever it is that He has us (i.e. at home, in school, at work, in our neighborhoods, etc.).

In closing, I must tell you that I come from a long line of men and women who have kept this great good news of the gospel alive for the past 2,000 years. Jan Hus (my predecessor by nearly 100 years) was executed in the year 1415 for the same convictions that "righteousness is by faith alone in Christ alone." Jan Hus' name (Hus) means goose, so his executors made fun of him by calling him "the goose." Just before Jan Hus was executed, he declared to his executors and to all who were watching, **"You may roast this goose now, but in a hundred years, there will come a Swan that you will not be able to silence."** And, that, by God's grace and good plan, was me.

Today, it's your turn to keep the gospel alive, to share the good news with the people around you that "the righteous shall live by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by works, so that no one may boast. Our salvation is His work because of His love and all for His glory. Even the faith that saves us comes from Him! Best of all, we are no longer slaves to sin, but beloved children of the living God." Is there any better news than that? I think not!