

## REFORMATION: POINTING TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

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October 31 marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The date is marked from when Martin Luther posted his “95 Theses” on the church door hoping to open a dialogue with church leadership to stop what he believed to be an unbiblical practice of selling indulgences.

Little did he know at that moment would begin for him a life of comparing church tradition to scripture, and then teaching in the common tongue what the scripture plainly teaches about all areas of faith. It should be noted that in Luther’s life, arguing against the theology behind selling indulgences from scripture was only the beginning.

As the printing press was a new invention and Luther had lots to say, he is probably the most published man in history. It is common to find statements in the history books that say from when he began writing, Luther did not have an unpublished thought.

However, some of his most important teachings are found in the simplest of pamphlets, a book called the “Small Catechism”, in which he writes in simple language with the intent that parents could use the book to teach the faith to their children. It covers the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the means of grace (primarily, the word of God, secondarily baptism and the Lord’s supper).

His simple statement, “Word alone, faith alone, grace alone,” has been the driving force of many churches throughout history.

- Word alone: As they teach the importance of the Bible as being God’s revelation of himself to us.
- Faith alone: Trusting in God for our salvation.
- Grace alone: Realizing that we cannot earn our salvation, as Jesus’ death on the cross was the gift of grace that secures that hope for us.

On April 18, 1521, Luther was ultimately commanded by the church to recant his teachings, and this is from where his famous quote came: “I am bound by the scriptures I have cited, for my conscience is captive to the word of God. .... I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me. Amen.”

This short passage was probably one of his most quoted and most loved scriptures. It so plainly expresses all that he wanted people to be able to know about their relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:4-9 says,

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God, nor a result of works, so that no one may boast.”