



QUARTERLY | 2:17

The Background of the Reformation

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The State of
Europe Before the
Reformation



Biography
of **Martin
Luther**



Lesser-
Known
Reformers –
Melancthon



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The Background of the Reformation

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Welcome to this issue of LTBS Magazine. Over the next two issues we will be looking at various features of the Reformation. Primarily in this issue the focus will be on the background to the Reformation, including some of the men whom God used to advance the cause. In the next edition we will look at the teachings of the Reformation. As you read, I trust that you will be encouraged to remember that God is still able to do such things in our generation. May we be spurred to pray on that God will move in such a way once again.

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TELEVISION PROJECT

Our six pioneer TV programmes have now been transmitted on the Revelation channel. Many hours were spent in preparation and recording, with many more in editing to ensure broadcasting specifications were met. We must thank our Martyrs church for the use of their fine facilities and for accommodating us during our recording sessions, which were spread over two evenings. To everyone who assisted at those recordings and all who joined us in the congregation, we express our deep gratitude. To our ministers who preached and had to put up with lights and cameras as well as keeping an eye on time, we extend sincere thanks. It was a team effort, and all was done for

the spread of the gospel and to the glory of God.

Meantime as we await feedback from viewers, preparations for further recordings continue apace. We are indebted to the committee of our Lurgan congregation, who have very kindly placed the large room of their Sunday school complex at our

This gives us a much-needed venue and is invaluable in so many ways.

disposal. This gives us a much-needed venue and is invaluable in so many ways. Its location is central and excellent for travel access. The large "broadcast set," once erected, will have a semi-permanent "home" and

won't have to be dismantled after recording sessions. Mr Jonathan McAuley has stored it in his workplace for a lengthy period of time, willingly putting up with the inconvenience and generously providing transportation.

Some minor work in the Lurgan complex is necessary, such as removing a pulpit platform, laying matching carpet, erecting detachable window blackouts, painting radiators with a matte finish, and making support brackets for an aluminium lighting truss system.

We plan to hold very soon (DV) a further series of programme recordings. As arrangements are finalized, we will keep you posted. Your continuing prayerful and financial support is earnestly sought as LTBS seeks to take this aspect of the ministry forward.



FPC MISSION IN LIBERIA STARTS FM RADIO STATION

After a three-year application process, and two weeks of testing a radio frequency, the Free Presbyterian Mission Church of Liberia (FPMCOL) was granted permission by the Liberian government to broadcast their new radio station on 92.5 FM.

The two-week test was to rule out potential interference with other stations. The government still needs to do their own test, but Rev. David

DiCanio, who is leading the project, says that he does not anticipate any difficulties since the government has not received any complaints.

The missionaries erected a 150-foot tower on the mission compound in Duazon, 20 miles outside Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. They also purchased a used 1000-watt transmitter and are currently broadcasting 18 hours per day with a signal that reaches into Monrovia and beyond, although the signal does get occasional interference from other stations in the downtown area.

The mission is looking to the Lord for continued funds to support the venture, including purchasing a new transmitter (using the current

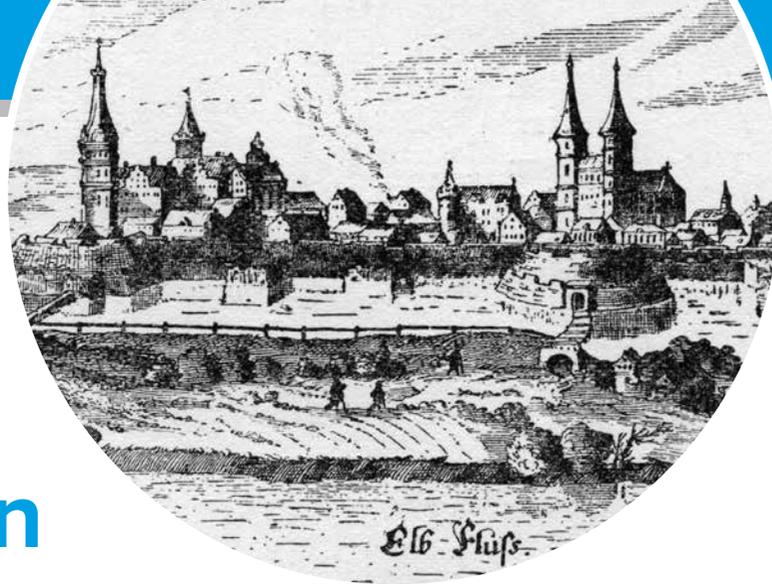
one as a backup) and paying for extra diesel fuel each day to run the mission compound generator five hours more than normal. They also hope to rent a large billboard on the main road to town to advertise the station.



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The State of Europe Before the Reformation



In recent times we have been regaled by the philosophy of what is called the emergent church. The title of this modern movement suggests a progression from darkness into light. However, the reality is quite the opposite: those who position themselves under this banner – though they claim to represent a “new Reformation” and boast of their own ninety-five theses and their own new Luther to point the way – are leading the church along a path that is actually a retreat into pre-Reformation spiritual and intellectual darkness.

Before the Reformation, darkness had been deepening across Europe for one thousand years. Though the Catholic Church had travelled for the best part of this millennium (500–1500) under the title of Christianity, the peculiar treasure of true Christianity – the light of the gospel of Christ – was missing. It is the Protestant Reformation that properly warrants the description of the true emergent church, because it freed biblical Christianity from the dark shroud of Romanism.

Rome’s way was to bury the gospel

under centuries of traditions, idolatries, and superstitions.

The Three Fantasies

- Indulgences, which had grown to extraordinary proportions even by Catholic standards, in effect offered salvation for sale for money; it was this practice that precipitated Martin Luther’s action of producing his Ninety-five Theses. The only thing these indulgences guaranteed, Luther said, was an increase in profit and greed; pardon of sin was in God’s power alone.

- Relics – such as a piece of Christ’s cross, straw from His manger, and milk from His mother – were in widespread use by the Church in the Middle Ages. Money was paid in order to venerate these relics and so escape years in purgatory. Inside the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, where Luther nailed his theses, were enough relics to permit a person to gain a deduction of 1,902,202 years from purgatory.

- Pilgrimages, journeys often undertaken as a form of penance, offered ample opportunities to purchase indulgences. Popular destinations, designated “holy

places,” included Jerusalem, Canterbury, Lourdes, Compostella, and Rome. Pardners and relic sellers swarmed over these sites, generating money for themselves and the Church.

What should have been the centrepiece in the church – the preaching of the Word of God – was virtually nonexistent during this dark era. Writing in 1520, Martin Luther lamented, “Whither hath the glory of the church departed! The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals and clerics, and yet not one of them preaches by virtue of his office.”

Rome viewed the Bible as a dangerous book, capable of being subversive in the hands of the “stupid and uneducated.” For this reason the churchmen locked it up in the learned tongue of Latin, limiting its use to privileged intellectuals. The common people were therefore denied the privilege of hearing a gospel that would give them the assurance of eternal life, with the result that doubt about one’s personal salvation was common – and, because it chained them to the Church, this doubt was actively encouraged.

The Three False Steps

In the centuries leading to the Reformation, loyalty to the papacy was severely questioned. Factors that were responsible for this reduction in respect included the following:

- From the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, the failure of the Crusades to free Jerusalem and halt Muslim expansion into the West gave people second thoughts about God’s hand being behind the papacy. Further disillusionment spread when, during these Crusades, Pope Urban II introduced the plenary indulgence that promised a full remission of temporary punishment for sins if one became a crusader – an act that “replaced” the gospel and the sacrifice of Christ with a definitive work that man could do.

- The Papal Schism (1378–1415) ended with the outrageous situation in which three men simultaneously claimed to be the legitimate pope – one in Avignon, the other in Rome, and the third in Pisa. In tandem with this bitter struggle for supremacy over the Church, immorality became rampant; simony (selling clerical offices) became standard; greed, lust, and scandal became epidemic. This served to destabilise the institution of the Church and brought into focus the illegitimacy of the office of the papacy.

- The Fall of Constantinople (1453) was a further black mark on the papacy. Eastern Orthodoxy and the Byzantine emperor requested aid as the Ottoman Empire was invading. However, when the

church in the East refused to pay the price that Rome demanded for her help – the complete capitulation of the Eastern church to Rome – Rome sent no aid and Constantinople fell to Islam. Byzantine Christians who then fled west from the onslaught of Islam brought with them a storehouse of ancient writing, manuscripts, and biblical texts and not only introduced into Europe many Christians who were not loyal to the pope, but also prepared the way for an expansion in learning.

The Three Facilitators

- The revival of learning that swept across Europe, known as the Renaissance, was governed by a policy that travelled under a Latin name, *ad fontes*, meaning that in examining any document, scholars should check back to the original copies. In the spiritual realm this meant that the most accurate study of Scripture would be performed when men broke free from the shackles of an inaccurate Latin Bible and consulted the original Hebrew and Greek documents.

- In 1516, one year before Luther’s Ninety-five Theses, Erasmus produced the first Greek New Testament in print. This enabled people to study the Bible at a deeper level and caused them to realise that the institutionalised Church had corrupted the gospel. Erasmus’ work became the basis for Luther’s translation of the New Testament into German and Tyndale’s translation into English.

- The invention of the printing press (1439) cannot be overstated, as it opened the door to the dissemination of learning. It facilitated the spread of the ideas of the Reformation and made the

Scriptures widely available. Luther called the coming of printing “God’s highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the gospel is driven forward.”

The Three Figureheads

Into this spiritual climate three main men, living in consecutive centuries, were raised up by God to spearhead the rediscovery of gospel light in Europe. The connection between them is illustrated by a set of medallions on display at the Prague Museum:

- One medallion features John Wycliffe (England, C14th) with some flint stones – “Wycliffe struck the spark.”
- The second shows John Huss (Bohemia, C15th) holding a lighted candle – “Huss lit up the candle.”
- Completing the trio is Martin Luther (Germany, C16th) holding aloft a torch – “Luther wielded the torch.”

Under God these men re-ignited the old biblical fire and were hugely instrumental in preparing Europe to emerge from the Roman darkness into the full light of the gospel.



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Biography of Martin Luther



There can be no better way to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation than to learn about the life and times of Martin Luther, the famous German Reformer, and the influence of the Word of God upon his life and ministry, which was to change not only Germany and Europe, but also the religious landscape of the world for successive generations. It has been said that John Wycliffe gathered the timber, John Huss struck the flint, but it was Martin Luther who kindled the flame.

Consider with me:

Luther's Discovering of the Word of God

In 1503, when Luther was twenty years of age and after two years of study at the University of Erfurt, he came across a copy of the Bible as he browsed in the library. He read it long and earnestly and with such intensity that one of the monks, who was his tutor at Erfurt, said to him, "Ah! Brother Martin, what is

there in the Bible? It is better to read the books of the ancient doctors. They have sucked the honey of the truth. The Bible is the cause of all the troubles in the church!" Luther's experience of salvation in the fall of 1515 began while he was lecturing on Paul's Epistle to the Romans. He wrote,

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection

Luther had entered into the greatest discovery of his life.

between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the justice 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 justice of God"

had filled me with hate, now it became inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven.

Luther had entered into the greatest discovery of his life and was no longer a prisoner "in the devil's dungeon."

Luther's Translating of the Word of God

Luther, following in the footsteps of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, was to become one of the great Bible translators. The account of how Luther was taken captive and hid in the castle of Wartburg reads like a modern-day thriller. For a long time his enemies believed that he had died, but he was in the Elector's castle for safekeeping. During the time of his captivity, Luther began to make a new translation of the New Testament into German, completing it in 1534. Sometimes they would search how to express the meaning of one word for three or even four weeks.

"Sometimes we scarcely succeeded in finishing three lines in four days." In an age when allegory ran riot, he could say, "Our first concern will be for the grammatical meaning, for this is the truly theological meaning." Luther was determined to put the Scriptures into the language of the common people. He believed that Scripture is the only standard for theological doctrine and practice. He said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God."

Luther's Preaching of the Word of God

With the truth of the gospel in his heart, Martin Luther could do nothing else but preach it. He could say with the apostle Paul, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Philipp Melancthon, his closest of friends, said that the secret of Luther's effectiveness was that his words were born not on his lips but in his soul. Thus he became known, through his preaching, as the monk who changed the world. His preaching was mostly the running commentary style – lively, relevant to life, direct, earnest, and totally loyal to the Scriptures. His attitude towards preaching is found in the famous words which he spoke in the Wittenberg church in March 1522:

I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word ... otherwise I did nothing ... The Word so greatly weakened

the papacy that never a prince or emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing. The Word did it all. Had I desired to foment trouble I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany. Yea, I could have

It was Luther's commitment to prayer and the study of the Word of God that made him the man of God that he was.

started such a little game at Worms, that the Emperor would not have been safe. But what would it have been? A mug's game! I left it to the Word.

Luther's Studying of the Word of God

The key to Luther's influence as a Reformer was due not only to his great scholarship but to his devotional life as a man of God. In preaching to his congregation he said, "As a shoemaker makes shoes and a tailor coats, so should a Christian pray. Prayer is the Christian's business." He often said that "to have prayed well is to have studied well." We have space only to include one of the many statements that Luther said in regard to his study of the Word of God:

The Bible is a very large, wide forest, wherein stand many trees of all kinds, from which we can gather many kinds of fruits. For in the Bible we have rich consolation, doctrine, instruction, exhortation, warning, promises, and threatening. But in all this forest there is not a tree which I have not shaken, and broken off a pair of apples or pears from it. First, I shake the whole apple tree that the ripest might fall, then I climb up the tree and shake each limb, and then each branch, and then each twig, and then I look under each leaf.

It was Luther's commitment to prayer and the study of the Word of God that made him the man of God that he was.

May God in His sovereignty raise up another Martin Luther in this day as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Our nation more than anything else requires another spiritual awakening.



Stanley Barnes
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Lesser-Known Reformers – Zwingli



Readers of the history of the Protestant Reformation will be well aware of the great significance of Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses. This was a turning point in the German Reformation. In Switzerland, the pivotal point of the Reformation occurred in what has become known as *"The Affair of the Sausages."* The year was 1522. On what was then considered by most people the first fasting Sunday in Lent, Ulrich Zwingli and about a dozen others deliberately broke the fasting rule by eating smoked sausages. This event took place in the house of Christoph Froschauer, who was charged with heresy. Zwingli defended Froschauer in a published sermon. He argued that *"Christians are free to fast or not to fast because the Bible does not prohibit the eating of meat during Lent."* This event is considered to be the start of the Reformation in Switzerland.

The spiritual leader of this group, Ulrich Zwingli, was born in the village of Wildhaus some 3,500 feet up in the Swiss Alps. His father was a farmer who also held the respected position of bailiff, or local magistrate. Zwingli was baptized a

Roman Catholic. Two of his uncles were priests, and they encouraged his father to train him up for the priesthood. As his education progressed, Zwingli became an accomplished debater, singer, and musician.

Zwingli was ordained a priest in 1506. He read the Mass for the first time in Wildhaus. His first church was in Glarus. At this time, Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion in Europe. Great spiritual darkness, superstition, and ignorance of the Scriptures prevailed. The gospel, which had been introduced to this region by two missionaries who came from Bangor in the North of Ireland in 610, was now long forgotten and forsaken. This young priest was shocked by the immorality and corruption he encountered among people and priests. He said, *"Out of one hundred, nay out of one thousand, there is scarcely one chaste priest."* He

Out of one hundred, nay out of one thousand, there is scarcely one chaste priest.

discovered that some priests of the Alpine regions were

secretly married and had children.

Ulrich devoted himself to the study of Scripture. The publication of the Greek New Testament of Erasmus in 1516 opened up a new world of studies to him. He copied the epistles of Paul so he could carry a compact edition with him and was able to memorise all these epistles in Greek! He was a man of the Word. Through the study of the Scriptures he was led to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Without hearing of Luther, Zwingli had been led by the Lord to see clearly those glorious truths of the gospel which bring forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, and an assured hope of heaven.

Zwingli ministered to the German-speaking population of Switzerland. A few years later God raised up another champion to minister to the French speakers of Switzerland; that man was John Calvin. How marvellous were the workings of God's Spirit in these times!

Zwingli took the words of 2 Timothy 4:2 to heart: *"Preach*

the word." He preached the loftiest truths of the gospel with simplicity and clarity so that all could understand. His sermons were direct, fervent, and above all evangelical. He pointed his hearers to Christ as the only way of salvation. He spoke out strongly against the sins of his time. For him the Bible stood supreme. He said, *"I began to try every doctrine by this touchstone. If I saw that a teaching could bear the test, I accepted it. If not, I rejected it."*

In 1517 Luther published his Ninety-five Theses. In 1523 Zwingli published his Sixty-seven Theses. While Luther's theses were largely against the sale of indulgences, Zwingli's dealt more directly with the central message of the gospel. His third thesis stated, *"Christ is the only way to salvation for all who ever were, are and shall be,"* and the fourth adds, *"Who seeks or points out another door errs, yes, he is a murderer of souls and a thief."*

Luther and Zwingli met personally in Marburg Castle in 1529 in an attempt to forge unity between the Lutherans

and the Zwinglians. Fifteen theological points were up for discussion, and agreement was quickly reached on fourteen of them. Zwingli could not accept as biblical Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation, that is, that the actual body and blood of Christ exist spiritually in the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper. This difference would later lead to some bitter exchanges between the two Reformers.

After Zurich embraced the Reformation, this movement spread to other

Zwingli could not accept as biblical Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation.

parts of Switzerland. Some states did not embrace the reforms advocated. The abolition of the Mass, the exposure of corruption in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the rejection of images in places of worship, and salvation by grace were opposed by some. Zwingli sought to strengthen the Protestant cause by calling for an alliance of reformed cities, and he was successful in the establishment of the Christian Civic Union. The Catholics also formed an alliance of Five States, or Cantons (the Christian Alliance), to counter the Protestant alliances. This led to increased tensions between the two parties.

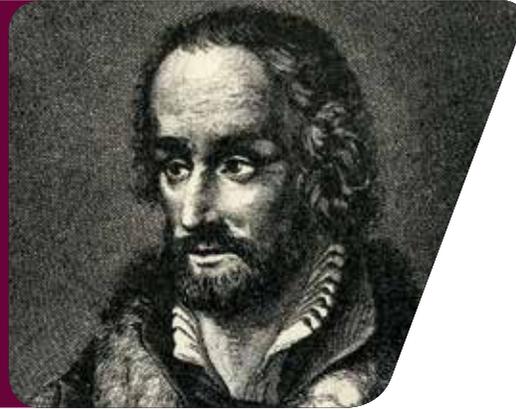
In fact, tensions ran so high that in 1529 Protestants and Roman Catholics met for battle in the First War of Kappel. Through negotiation, war was avoided. However, the issues were not resolved, and just two years later the Five Catholic States declared war on Zurich, and the Second War of Kappel took place. A papist force of some seven thousand men faced two thousand from Zurich. The larger force prevailed. Five hundred Protestants were killed. This number included twenty-four pastors and their spiritual leader, Ulrich Zwingli. His body was cut in quarters and burned. The next day the Five States fired their guns in jubilation.

Heinrich Bullinger was Zwingli's successor. In tribute to his predecessor he said, *"Not to any person or age, but to God alone must be ascribed the victory of Truth."* Let us give God the glory for the triumph of truth in and through Ulrich Zwingli.



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is minister of Rutherglen Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland.

Lesser-Known Reformers – Melancthon



Martin Luther said, *"In my teaching profession I do not respect anything more than Philipp's advice."* Philipp Melancthon was one of the humblest and meekest of the Reformers and best known as Martin Luther's right-hand man.

His early life

Philipp Schwarzerdt was born, the first of five children, on 19 February 1497 into an affluent family in Bretten, Germany. His uncle Johann Reuchlin suggested that Philipp should follow the custom among humanists of his time and change his surname from the German *Schwartzertd* to the Greek equivalent *Melancthon*, by which he is known to this day.

Melancthon's uncle secured a place for him in the University of Heidelberg when he was just twelve years of age; two years later, at the age of fourteen, he received his BA. His exceptional progress through the educational system was

frustrated when he applied for his MA. The professors were hesitant to allow him to continue, on the grounds that they thought the fifteen-year-old could not be accepted as a teacher on the event of his graduation. He later finished his studies at Tübingen, and in January of 1514 he received the MA at the age of seventeen and was accepted into the faculty to teach. He began to study theology in 1516 and appeared at this juncture to discover New Testament Christianity, which became known as Reformation theology. This brought him into difficulties, as the university where he lectured was not willing to accept his theological conclusions.

His arrival in Wittenberg

On 31 October 1517 Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses to the doors in Wittenberg Castle Church. Ten months later a short, skinny, and physically unimpressive 21-year-old Philipp Melancthon arrived in Wittenberg by invitation to take the new

position of Greek lecturer in the university founded by Frederick the Wise in 1502. Melancthon's lectures were well received, with many students, townspeople, and nobles gathering to hear

Melancthon's monumental contribution to the Reformation was the Augsburg Confession.

this exceptional orator. One man who was particularly impressed by his talents was none other than Martin Luther.

His relationship with Luther

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). This verse describes the relationship between these two Reformation giants. Luther taught Melancthon Reformed doctrine while Melancthon polished Luther's knowledge of the Greek language. Together they worked tirelessly and,

although not agreed on everything, their friendship grew and lasted till death. When comparing himself to Melancthon, Luther once said, *"I was born to go to war and give battle to sects and devils; that is why my books are stormy and warlike ... But Master Philip comes softly and neatly, tills and plants, sows and waters with pleasure, as God has abundantly given him the talents."* Melancthon was to say of Luther, *"I would rather die than be separated from this man."*

His marriage

Both Luther and Melancthon were reluctant to marry for fear that such a relationship would hinder their work. Melancthon in 1519 said, *"I am asked to get married because it is thought to be an improvement of my situation. If I knew that marriage would not disturb my work and my writing, I could easily decide in favour of it. For the time being, however, it will not happen."* Although having spoken on the subject with such determination, his single status did not last long, as one year later he married Katharina Krapp. Both Luther and Melancthon were hesitant to marry, yet both of them enjoyed long and happy marriages. Philipp and Katharina were blessed with four children – Anna, Philipp, Georg, and Magdalen – and their domestic life was marked with happiness. On one occasion a scholar found Melancthon rocking

the cradle with one hand and holding a book in the other.

His contribution to the Reformation

It was Melancthon who urged Luther to translate the Bible into the German of his day. When in hiding in Wartburg castle Luther began the translation. After his return to Wittenberg he polished his translation with Melancthon's help.

Luther worked endlessly on the evangelical theology but had little time to systematize the doctrines. Melancthon took on this task, writing the first summary of evangelical theology, entitled *Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum*. Luther was enthusiastic about the book and recommended it as essential reading to understand Reformation theology.

Melancthon's monumental contribution to the Reformation was the Augsburg Confession. On 21 January 1530, Emperor Charles V called for an imperial diet to meet in Augsburg, Germany, to try to mend the fractions between himself, the pope, the German princes, and the Protestants. A confession to represent the Protestant beliefs was immediately necessary, and Philipp Melancthon compiled the Augsburg Confession in consultation with Martin Luther, who could not be present as he had been outlawed. The Confession, consisting

of twenty-one articles, was completed and signed by seven princes along with representatives of two free cities and delivered to the emperor on 25 June 1530. This became one of the most important documents of the Protestant Reformation.

His death

Approaching his final days, Melancthon wrote out his reasons for not fearing death: *"Thou shalt be delivered from sins, and be freed from the acrimony and fury of theologians. Thou shalt go to the light, see God, look upon his Son, learn those wonderful mysteries which thou hast not been able to understand in this life."* Having suffered a fierce cold followed by a fever and general weakness of health, he died on 19 April 1560. His remains were laid beside his fellow Reformer Dr Martin Luther in Wittenberg Castle Church, a few feet away from the doors on which Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses and ignited the Protestant Reformation.



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Bible Words – Justification

"How then can man be justified with God?"

Job 25:4

The question has perpetual relevance. Job asked it in the heat of affliction, but his question might well be one from the lips of any individual. When R. A. Torrey held his gospel campaigns he would have a banner erected above the pulpit that read, "Get right with God." Why do we need to get right with God?

There is something horribly wrong with man that contrasts starkly with God.

Getting right with God is not a matter of good works.

Man is a sinner, while God is perfect and holy. "In him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The status of humanity is summed up by Job himself in the midst of his physical

misery: "I have sinned" (Job 7:20). Faced with the prospect of meeting a holy God, the outlook for the soul is the grim reality of eternal doom. Since heaven is the place where nothing that defiles can enter, for sinners that place is barred.

The biblical truth of justification explains how a person can be right with God.

Let's state the obvious and yet the most rejected Bible fact: getting right with God is not a matter of good works. Martin Luther, the monk, kept up a litany of penances, prayers, confessions, and a host of efforts with which he hoped to build up merit with God. Of these he said, "If ever a man got to heaven by his monkery it was I," so strictly did he keep up the duties of his order. But it was all to no avail. Luther could not be perfect and so could find no peace that he was right with God.

Paul said in Galatians, a book Luther came to love and a truth he came to discover, chapter 2 verse 16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." The sad reality is many still fall into this error. When

faced with the question "Are you right with God?" they respond, "I am not the worst sinner. I do the best I can." A list of good things done becomes the basis of their "right" relationship with God. At what point these merits add up to being right with God they cannot tell, but they cling to the hope all will be well.

This not only flies in the face of Scripture warnings against a work-based faith, but it is far removed from how God justifies a sinner. In Romans 8:33 Paul

says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." This is an acceptance in the eyes of God which remains intact despite every assault and accusation from the devil without or from the soul within.

The reason this is so is because of the basis upon which God justifies a sinner. The justification that God brings to the soul is not based on what a sinner does but on what Christ the Saviour did through His life and death and all that

He continues to be for us. For this reason

justification and the sacrificial death of Christ upon the cross are brought together. In Romans 5:9 it is stated, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." That is, through the

The justification that God brings to the soul is not based on what a sinner does.

value of the shed blood of Christ our sins are pardoned and forgiven. Furthermore, in verse 19 of the same passage the obedience of Christ, that is, His perfection, is said to be given to the sinner so as to make, or declare, us righteous: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The question to be faced is, are you justified? Are you resting upon the person and work of Christ alone for the salvation of your soul? If not, you may flee with repentance from sin and faith in Christ to the only safe and sure foundation. It is, as Paul said in Hebrews 6:19, "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast."

One repeated objection to this teaching is this: if we are justified and made

right before God through Christ, surely this must lead to a careless indifference towards sin? If such an argument were not dealt with in Scripture there might be difficulties in answering it. However, it is striking that in chapter 6 of Romans, immediately after presenting how justification is through Christ, Paul states in verses 1–2, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" This is exactly the same objection! Paul's answer is ours: "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Justification does not stand in isolation from all the other elements of God's grace. Those who are saved are changed by the grace of God and made new creatures in Christ. Why would they wish to live for the devil? They desire to live for Christ. Though we battle with sin and fail daily, the believer's standing with God, in Christ, is forever the same, justified! Right with God! Standing in Christ!



David Smith
is minister of Ardaraugh
Free Presbyterian Church,
Northern Ireland.





Retired Minister Interview

Can you share your testimony?

Before I was saved I came under conviction twice. The first time I didn't know what it was all about. As an eight-year-old I stood on a moonlit harvest night, with my mother, beside my dying father's bedside. He said to my mother, "Nancy, don't worry about me, because the God who put that moon there is looking after me." He had gotten saved two years before at a tent mission in Broughshane conducted by the Belfast evangelist Alec Kerr. When he said that there was a presence that filled that room.

The other time was when I was twenty-one. The man who lived two doors up had gotten saved at a Brethren mission and kept inviting me along to the meetings. After many excuses I felt I had to go, and in the meeting, as I sat listening, I became angry – I thought that my friend had

told the preacher everything about me. As he preached on Isaiah 14:9 I realised that the Lord was speaking to me. But I went home, that conviction wore off, and I went back to my life of sin for the next eight years.

In 1971 I was building a house for a Christian man and had come home from work. My wife had gone upstairs to put the children to bed and had fallen asleep herself,

That message and that tract broke me down that night.

so that evening I was sitting alone downstairs. My mind went back to that meeting eight years ago, and I was also thinking about a gospel tract that I had recently read published by the late Ernie Allen. That message and that tract broke me down that night. I was very hard

and very sinful, and I knew that the Lord was the only one who would give me help with the great burden I felt. I got down on my knees and called on the Lord to save me, and when I got up I knew that the burden had been rolled away. I was just full of the joy of the Lord.

The next morning I asked the Lord to deliver me from the cigarettes and also that someone would really see the change in my life to prove that I was saved. I worked all day building, and at 6 PM the man I was working for came to me and said to me, "George, did you get saved last night? I saw something different about you today!" He had been praying for me at that time. That night I threw the cigarettes into the fire and told my wife about my salvation.

How were you called into the ministry?

When I got saved I wanted everyone to know I was

saved and that they too could be saved. I got tracts from Every Home Crusade and did every house in my home village of Broughshane and also in some surrounding villages.

After attending the Gospel Tabernacle in Ballymena both my wife and I felt that we would like to make that our spiritual home. We got a wonderful welcome that first night we attended the church, the people were singing their hearts out, and I heard the gospel faithfully preached by Rev. James Beggs. It was this ministry that laid the Christian foundation in my life. There were many people there who believed in prayer – everything was done in prayer and by prayer. I learned to pray in the presence of people who knew how to pray.

One night as we were sitting in church I was not focusing on the message because I was thinking about the recent leading of the Lord in my life. I knew that the Lord was calling me to give myself to full-time service. No one else knew about this. During the message the preacher hit the pulpit and said, "Young man, what withholdest thou? 'Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine' (1 Kings 20:3)."

I didn't feel that I was "ministry material," but I

wanted to do the Lord's will and knew that I would be satisfied no other way. I got the necessary qualifications, entered the college, and trained for the ministry.

Can you share some of the blessings from your time in the ministry?

When I went to Coleraine, I asked for God's help to build the Sunday school and start

I knew that the Lord was calling me to give myself to full-time service.

a youth fellowship. After 4 years we had 232 children in the Sunday school with 23 teachers. We had so many children that we went into the country areas and started 6 children's meetings reaching another 250 each week. We also had a youth meeting with 40 young people. This was all done through prayer.

When we were putting up our new church building I asked the committee to have it completed a week before the planned mission because I wanted to hold a week of prayer first. I always found that a mission begins in the hearts of God's people. I preached to God's people for four weeks before the mission about getting their hearts right with God. That's the main battle for church and minister. We had the week of prayer and three

weeks of mission and during those three weeks eighty-two souls were counselled for salvation. That was 1982, and it was all done through prayer.

The Lord gave me a helpmeet in life who was like an angel from heaven to me. She was fully involved in the work, and I want to pay tribute to all the help she has been.

What advice would you give young men going into the ministry?

Before I started in the ministry I was given great advice, and therefore I asked the Lord to help me with two things. I asked Him to help me to be faithful to Him and also to be fair to all the people in my ministry. Because of this I have had an enjoyable ministry and have known the blessing of God.

Be sure of God's calling, be willing to sacrifice, and the Lord will bless you for it.



George White
is now retired after having ministered in Coleraine and Donaghadee Free Presbyterian churches, Northern Ireland.

Advice on Helping You Let The Bible Speak – In the Open-Air



One of the greatest opportunities for letting the Bible speak and sharing the message of the gospel is open-air evangelism.

Speaking on one occasion to a builder regarding his remarkably tidy construction site, he told me that his site was his “shop window,” so he always wanted it to be attractive to potential customers. The open-air meeting is the opportunity for the church to present the gospel to men and women who pass by. It may be the only opportunity for them to gain an impression of what the gospel is and what the church is all about; therefore we should ensure that *“all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The open-air meeting is perhaps the only contact some will have with the gospel, so we realise that souls could be won or lost by the attitude, conduct, and

content of the meetings. Having been involved in open-air evangelism since my conversion to Christ in 1965, allow me to offer some practical advice and lessons I have learned over the years.

Personal evangelism is the preaching of the gospel of Christ to individuals in order

The open-air meeting is perhaps the only contact some will have with the gospel.

to secure their conversion. It is that hand-to-hand dealing with men, women, and children, and it is the simplest form of Christian work – the kind that everyone can do. It is the most effective method of winning souls to Christ.

Prayer is everything

The apostle Paul wrote to the

Philippians, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (Philippians 4:6).

It goes without saying, yet we need to say it and to stress the point, that every effort in evangelism, including open-air work, must be bathed in prayer. There are so many exhortations in Scripture that teach us to pray, and we are so conscious that we have no might or power in our own strength, so we need to pray for the Lord’s blessing on the preaching of the gospel and for those we come in contact with through the open-air meeting. May God give them the listening ear to hear and receive His Word. As we take the gospel to the streets and lanes, the highways and the byways, there will be those who will be sympathetic and those who will be antagonistic to the message of the cross,

but our responsibility is to *“preach the word ... in season, out of season”* (2 Timothy 4:2).

Before we venture into the street, let us enter into the place of prayer.

As the open-air meeting is the only contact some may ever have with the Free Presbyterian Church, and the gospel, our aim ought to be to present the gospel message in word, testimony, and song in a God-glorifying manner. It should be arranged beforehand who will lead, sing, testify, or preach at the service so that there is no hesitation or confusion once the meeting starts. Radio presenters talk about *“dead air time,”* and that is also a problem in the open air. If musicians are involved, ensure they are familiar with the hymns and that singers bring messages in song that exalt Christ and His gospel. Testimonies should be short and to the point, telling of the grace of God and the radical life change the gospel brings. If *“gospel shots”* are used (people coming forward to the microphone to quote a verse of Scripture), let all be prepared and have the verse at their fingertips and step forward without hesitation so the meeting progresses unhindered.

Preaching should be evangelistic

A well-known open-air

preacher, the late Pastor Raymond McKeown, used to say that in open-air preaching you had a moving audience, as most people did not stop to listen to the message. There is a window of opportunity as they pass by the meeting, so give them the gospel by quoting plenty of gospel texts in the message.

Before we venture into the street, let us enter into the place of prayer.

We are conscious that the Word of God will accomplish the work of God in the human heart, so we ought to preach the gospel in such a way that a passerby within earshot of the P.A. system will know the reality that men are sinners and that Christ died for sinners and that salvation is in Christ alone and that salvation is freely offered to them in the gospel. Many a man or woman has been spoken to and convicted of their sin and convinced of their need through the simple message preached in the open air. I remember as a young man starting out in Christian service in the open air being greatly encouraged by Dr Paisley when an older Christian referred to the young men as *“only being open-air preachers.”* Dr Paisley reminded him that the

apostles Paul and Peter were open-air preachers and that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached mostly in the open air.

As in all preaching, we preach for a verdict, calling upon men and women to repent of their sin and turn to Christ. Always give an opportunity for those who hear to respond, making yourself available to speak to them or to give them literature to help them find Christ as Saviour. When the great apostle Paul preached at Athens in Acts 17:32–34 we are told, *“Some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter ... Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed.”* We pray that as the gospel goes forward in the open air, many will believe.



Fred Greenfield
is minister of Dunmurry
Free Presbyterian Church,
Northern Ireland.

The Importance of Gospel Preaching



A young man told some friends that God had called him to be a preacher. The remark was made to him, *“What a pity to throw your life away!”* That is the perception of many in this world. Lloyd George, British prime minister during the First World War, declared, *“When the chariot of humanity gets stuck ... nothing will lift it out except great preaching that goes straight to the mind and heart. There is nothing in this case that will save the world but what was once called, the foolishness of preaching.”* For nearly fifty years I have had the privilege of preaching that gospel of Jesus Christ.

Preaching the gospel is God’s ordained plan to reach lost humanity. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* Sadly, we live in an age when many people, even in churches, are questioning the whole concept of preaching; for some it is old-fashioned

and out of date. But it is clear from God’s Word that preaching, though foolish in the eyes of the world, is the primary method that God has chosen to communicate the gospel of redeeming grace. The preacher is a herald

Preaching the gospel is God’s ordained plan to reach lost humanity.

or an ambassador who proclaims an authoritative message from the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whilst all Christians are called witnesses (Isaiah 43:10), not all are called preachers. Those who are to be preachers must be called of God. Romans 10:14–15 asks, *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall*

they preach, except they be sent?” Mark 3:13–14 says of the Lord Jesus, *“He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.”*

Preaching therefore is not an invention of the church, but it was the commission that she received from the Lord Jesus. Over the years it has been recognised that men like Martin Luther and John Calvin were instrumental in the recovery of the gospel during the Protestant Reformation. Their proclamation and defence of biblical truth was exemplary, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to them. They were tireless preachers rather than simply being good organisers or administrators over the flock. The preaching of the gospel was the very heart of the Reformation faith, and the Reformers brought back the central role of preaching into public worship.

The task of the preacher is to declare the gospel with authority and passion, not sharing some personal opinion or giving advice to his hearers, and to do so he needs the power of the Holy Ghost (Zechariah 4:6). D. L. Moody said, *“When will men learn that they cannot do God’s work without God’s power?”*

So what must we preach? Paul instructed Timothy to *“preach the Word”* (2 Timothy 4:2). In Acts 8:4 we are told, *“They ... went every where preaching the word,”* and through this many precious souls were saved. The Word of God is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he [Jesus] expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27). Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 1:23, *“But we preach Christ crucified.”* There is salvation

There is real power in the preaching of the old-fashioned gospel.

and reconciliation with God only through the Lord Jesus Christ and the precious blood He shed on the cross. Alas, many preachers leave the blood of Jesus out of their messages, even though God declares that without

shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself”* (Colossians 1:20). Someone once challenged Spurgeon that all his sermons sounded alike. He replied, *“That is correct. Whenever I take a text I make a beeline for the cross.”*

There is real power in the preaching of the old-fashioned gospel. The Lord Jesus still has power today to save souls, change lives, liberate the captives, and transform homes by His saving grace. God saves sinners by grace, through faith, but how does God give the undeserving sinner faith? Romans 10:17 states, *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* The sinner does not need religion; he needs salvation, and that is found through grace alone, in Christ alone.

Oh, that preachers would once again get excited about carrying the message of Jesus Christ to needy souls and feel the compassion that Jesus felt when He viewed those who were burdened and lost in their sin (Matthew 9:36). John Wesley advised young preachers to *“put fire*

in your sermons or put your sermons in the fire.” Another said, *“Preach. Preach for a verdict and expect it. God will honour your faith with souls.”* May the Lord give us a passion for souls in our congregations. A young missionary who had been invalided home was asked why he was eager to get back to his people. He replied, *“Because I cannot sleep for thinking about them.”*

Another declared, *“Preachers should preach as if they ne’er should preach again – as dying men to dying men.”* We need a generation of preachers that love the Lord and His Word, who will preach Christ and His gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”*



William McCrea
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One-Way Ticket to Tarshish



Have you ever found yourself sighing, “*Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest*”? Does your present trial make you doubt that God’s will is “sweet” and “beloved”? If this is where you are, my friend, you are not alone. Most Christians have felt this way at least once in their lives. Severe challenges may tempt us to misinterpret and even run away from our painful circumstances. That’s where Jonah made a costly mistake. And in moments of weakness, we could too.

Nineveh: an impossible mission

Sometimes God asks His people to do very difficult things. God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh and “*cry against*” its wickedness. I always thought Jonah’s greatest trial was lived out in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights. But have you any idea what going to Nineveh meant? Nineveh was a massive city about sixty miles wide and the powerful capital of the Assyrian empire. An

estimated 600,000 Ninevites were in the process of exterminating the northern kingdom of Israel, so Jonah would have known about

Sometimes God asks His people to do very difficult things.

their brutal treatment of his own people. In modern terms, going to preach in Nineveh would be like going to preach in Berlin, Germany, during WW2, or going to Mosul (where Nineveh once stood) to the headquarters of ISIS. On a human level, this was an impossible mission for one man.

Consider also the journey to Nineveh: 1,000 miles northeast from Joppa, at 3 miles per hour on foot, 48 miles per day. It would have taken Jonah 3 weeks to hike over rough terrain and precarious conditions to get there in the first place. It seems Jonah quickly calculated that the cons outweighed the pros and

talked himself into believing that an easy sea voyage of 1,600 nautical miles in the opposite direction would prove the better option.

Tarshish: a far-off-fields-look-greener alternative

Commentators suggest that Tarshish was the farthest land due west to which a boat could sail out of Joppa in the Mediterranean, most likely Spain. For Jonah, Tarshish was a radical escape route. By going there, he could avoid conflict and find peace. Right? How foolish Jonah was to think he could choose his own path and know what was better for him! Tarshish was not an evil place; it was just not the will of God for his life. No matter how well he justified himself in forsaking Nineveh, Jonah was rebelling against God. Sound familiar?

How do we react when God asks us to do something difficult?

We love the will of God when it pleases us, but when it brings hardship, we don’t want to accept it. If we’re honest with ourselves, we are prone to misinterpret trials

and believe God is not in them. We forget that Divine Providence is superintending our entire lives every day! Self-preservation, rather than listening to the Lord’s direction, will make us more liable to make a poor judgment call. In times of uncertainty, wait upon the Lord. Don’t take matters into your own hands. There are lots of Tarshishes out there promising a more comfortable lifestyle, but if God is not in it, you will not be blessed. We must obey the Lord at all costs, even if it means losing everything. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., always said, “*Do right though the stars fall.*”

Devil's purpose

Remember that the devil will seize any opportunity to divert us from the Lord’s course. He will try convincing argument: “*Your circumstances strongly indicate that Nineveh is not God’s will for you. Listen to your heart. Believe in yourself. Trust your intuition. Think outside the box.*” Jonah’s circumstances lined up perfectly: an available ship docked at Joppa, room on board, and fare money in his pocket. Everything looked right. It seems Jonah had “*peace*” about his decision because he went on board, relaxed, and slept through a raging storm. Having peace about a decision does not necessarily indicate that you are following God’s will, nor do favourable circumstances. We cannot rely on feelings. We must keep our eyes on the Lord.

God's grace

We know well the outcome of Jonah’s unwise choice, but when he repented of it, God’s amazing grace saved his life and gave him another opportunity. There was no hesitation to obey the second time, and God used Jonah’s basic message, “*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,*” to do mighty works in that wicked city. The Ninevites turned to the Lord, from the king down to the least of the people. It was a remarkable demonstration of the grace of God in an impossible situation.

There is a special gem hidden in the midst of this story that we must not miss. The Lord told Jonah that one of the reasons He wanted to save Nineveh was because of the 120,000 in the city who did not know “*their right hand and their left hand*” (Jonah 4:11). Commentators believe these are young children – babies and toddlers. It is such a blessing to witness the Lord’s tender heart at work for His little ones in this war-torn city! That should encourage us to pray more earnestly for children in similar situations all over the world.

What does "your Nineveh" look like?

Is the Lord’s will for you a change of direction, or is it remaining where you are and facing the present challenges? Is your Nineveh a looming illness or perhaps the need to repair some broken relationship? When it

comes to matters of right and wrong, the commands of God are clear and we don’t need discernment, just obedience. But in matters of uncertainty

Is the Lord's will for you a change of direction?

or new direction, we must carefully seek out the Lord’s way in the Lord’s Word. The Bible tells us that the Lord promises to direct our paths when we acknowledge Him in all our decisions. May we learn to rest in Him and wait patiently for Him and when we can’t understand His plan, never be tempted to give up and give in to that one-way ticket to Tarshish.

*The will of God will never take you,
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.*

Author unknown



Jill Saunders

is the wife of Dr Larry Saunders, minister of Toronto Free Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Canada, and a teacher and guidance counsellor at Whitefield Christian Academy.

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