



# Martin Luther: A Reformer Applies the Solas

Lesson Three

## The Story of the Solas So Far... A Monk in Search of Salvation at the End of the Dark Ages – 1483-1517

- **A Student Lawyer Encounters Death:** “Where will I go when I die?”
- **A Serious Monk Searches for Salvation:** “What must I do to be saved?”

The most dangerous threat in all of history is a common man with a common Bible committed to an uncommon cause—the Great Commission!

“What I began as a Doctor, I must truly confess to the end of my life. I cannot keep silent or cease to teach.” ~ Martin Luther

## The Rest of the Story of the Solas... A Reformer Applies the Solas at the Dawn of a New Age – 1517-1546

### 1. Luther **NAILS** it! 1517

He hammers 95 statements for debate (= 95 theses) on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on “All Saints Eve”, October 31!

- ❖ Attacked the **abuses** of indulgences, not the “**proper**” practice of them...yet!

**Penance** – One of the 7 sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church that dealt with confession and satisfaction which was administered by priests

**Indulgences** – Documents prepared by the church to sell to individuals either for themselves or on behalf of the dead.

**Total indulgence** – An indulgence that would release a person from purgatory altogether but was seldom offered.

- ❖ The sale of indulgences was used to finance church projects like the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome!

### 2. Luther **PUBLISHES** it! 1520

He publishes his convictions with the aid of the new invention of the Gutenberg press!

- ❖ **The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation**

**Attacked:** The hierarchy and authority of the Roman Catholic Church

**Affirmed:** The authority of believer-priests to interpret the Bible and reform the church.

**Radical Reformation Still Needed:** Gave too much authority to the State over Church matters!

- ❖ **The Babylonian Captivity of the Church**

**Attacked:** The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, especially the Mass.

**Affirmed:** The validity of the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper!

**Radical Reformation Still Needed:** Did not fully embrace believer’s baptism by immersion and view of Lord’s Supper was still in need of reform.

*If the papacy did not free churches from these sacramental abuses, then it “is identical with the kingdom of Babylon and the Antichrist itself.” –Luther*  
“What is asserted without the Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed.” - Luther

- ❖ **On the Freedom of the Christian Man**

**Attacked:** The theology of the Roman Catholic Church.



**Affirmed:** Justification by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers as a result of personal faith in Jesus Christ!

*"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." - Martin Luther*

**Radical Reformation Still Needed:** Did not fully apply the idea of Christian freedom to the idea of "soul liberty" and rejection of a state church.

### 3. Luther **STANDS** for it! 1521

He refuses to change his beliefs (recant) when summoned by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire to the City of Worms for an Imperial Diet: "Here I stand! I can do no other!"

*"Will you defend these books all together, or do you wish to recant some of what you have said?"*

*"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or plain reason (for I believe in neither pope nor in councils alone, for it is well known, not only that they have erred, but have also contradicted themselves), I am mastered by the passages of Scripture which I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant, for it is neither safe nor honest to violate one's conscience. [I can do no other. Here I take my stand,] God being my helper. Amen." - Martin Luther*

*"All that is deformed ought to be reformed. The Word of God alone teaches us what ought to be so, and all reform effected otherwise is vain."  
- Francis Lambert*

### 4. Luther **TRANSLATES** it! 1521

In an amazing 10 months, he translates the Bible into the German language for the common man!

*"If God had wanted me to die thinking I was a clever fellow, He would not have gotten me into the business of translating the Bible." - Luther*

By the end of his life, Martin Luther wrote 60,000 pages, yet he hoped that "all my books would disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone be read."

### 5. Luther **MARRIES** it! 1525

He marries the former nun, Katharina von Bora.



### 6. Luther **SINGS** it! 1527?

He writes one of the greatest hymns in all of church history, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"!

### 7. Luther **BLOWS** it! 1538, 1543

In his later years, he writes some very anti-Jewish material and never completely reforms according to the NT.

*"The Reformer is always right about what's wrong. However, he's often wrong about what is right." - G.K. Chesterton*

## Is the Reformation Over?

- No, the Roman **CATHOLIC** Church still teaches what Luther was protesting back in 1517.
- No, many **PROTESTANT** churches and denominations (Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian) stopped short of going all the way to reform according to the NT local church.
- No, there are still **BAPTISTS** and other churches that practice believer's baptism but still need to realign themselves with Christ and His Word and Spirit. (For more on the radical reformation see *The Anabaptist Story* by William R. Estep)

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." – Jesus to the Seven Churches of Revelation*

On his deathbed, Luther was asked: "**Are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in his name?**" He answered "**Yes**", before taking his final breath. – Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame*



Books for Further Reading:

*Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* by Roland H. Bainton

*The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World* by Stephen J. Nichols

*The Legacy of Luther* Edited by R. C. Sproul and Stephen J. Nichols

*The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* by Michael Reeves

*25 Surprising Marriages: How Great Christians Struggled to Make Their Marriages Work* by William J. Petersen

*Katie Luther, First Lady of the Reformation* by Ruth Tucker

*Katharina von Bora: A Reformation Life* by Rudolph K. Markwald

Movies/DVDs for Viewing:

*Luther* - 2003 movie with Joseph Fiennes in the starring role is well-made and very good.

*Martin Luther* - 1953 B&W classic with Niall MacGinnis, nominated for two academy awards but failed to be approved by Quebec's film censorship board, which was made up entirely of French-speaking Catholics since Luther's teachings remained as heretical in 1953 as they were in the 16th Century, and thus was never released in Quebec's movie theaters; it could only be seen there in the basements of Protestant churches.

