

## First Person Presentation: Martin Luther

*Reformation Month 2004*

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Good evening. Permit me a few words first as myself. I must tell you that it was 20 years ago this month that your Senior Pastor made the suggestion of this kind of presentation and I must tell you how blessed the opportunity of ministry has been as a result. This congregation heard first each of the presentations on the several figures. I'm trying to increase that number now and hope to bring John Hus next week.

As a result of this and having stepped aside from the classroom this previous spring, I'm now entering upon a new ministry. Wherever I receive invitations across the country, now have had an opportunity on three continents and in this continent from Maine to California, and I credit very much the debt I owe to your pastor.

He commented a few minutes ago about coming in a monk's garb. I have to tell you that a little more than 30 years ago when we were filming "Flame in the Wind" at the university, I was a monk, howbeit a Dominican monk then, and often because of the necessity of make-up and costume and the irregular nature of filming while teaching also, on several occasions I attended class and lectured in monastic garb. I had a tonsure, an ample growth of beard many months in the making, and carried my briefcase and in sandals and brown robe. The students tolerated it but one day walking from one building to another, I was approaching a crosswalk at a road on campus and just then there approached coming down that road, a very ample limousine filled with rather ample Alabama ladies who apparently obviously were coming as visitors to the campus and I was wearing a monk's garb and carrying a briefcase as I waited for the car to pass as they gawked at the sight. What they went home to tell, I will never know.

It has been at least three years since Martin Luther visited here. Many of you have remembered this life, having heard it now, some of you, several times, but as you are growing older, your memory is less keen than it was and perhaps there will be something new in this rehearsal tonight.

The theme and purpose of all this is the emphasis on the fact that God uses human instruments to do his work in this world. That is an amazing privilege and the realization that he who could command angels to do his bidding, invites men and women, men and women of feet of clay, men and women of like passions to all of us. They were not

special until God got hold of them. They intended no great work but were used of God to serve a great God and to serve him well. It is an amazing thing to realize that more books in these last 500 years have been written about Martin Luther than about any other person who has walked this earth except the Lord Jesus Christ himself. That's a remarkable testimony to the effect of life and to the way the Spirit of God employed a human instrument, frail, weak, impulsive, Petrine in many respects, but faithful, and used of the Spirit of God to uphold the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ.

So with your imagination, permit me to tell you the story of my life. Born one hour before midnight on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November in 1483. First of seven children in a peasant's home, a home of farmers who had been farmers for generations. A religious home after the manner of the times. We knew nothing but the Church of Rome. It was the only organized system. We were taught to obey God, we were taught to love God, and we were taught to learn how by obeying our parents. They were to be obeyed.

My mother once whipped me for having stolen one walnut from her cupboard. She whipped me. I thought that was a severe punishment for such a minor misdemeanor, but she did not and to her it was a principle. I had disobeyed and I must learn to obey.

I'm sure my father loved me but it was never evident in his words. He was to be obeyed. I gained my concept of God from my earthly father. God was a sever judge and he was to be obeyed. I knew nothing of the grace of God. I knew nothing of a loving heavenly Father. I say, I'm sure my father loved me and I would not demean his love, but it was a sample to me of an angry judge who has condemned me for what I am and for what I do.

We prayed to St. Anne in my home. The saints were everywhere in our lives. Every village had its own saint. Every occupation had its own saint. My father soon after my birth became involved in a partnership in a mining enterprise, an open iron pit, and we moved from Eisleben, the city of my birth, to Mansfeld where I spent the next several years. The patron saint of miners was St. Anne. St. Anne, so she was the one to whom we regularly first addressed our appeals to heaven.

Every day was some saint's day and more than one saint's day. In those days, when you were anticipating the birth of a child, you did not bother with books full of common German given names, you instead waited until the day the child was born, you looked at the calendar to discover whose saint's day that was and that was the name, or usually the name of the next day's saint because baptism followed the next day after birth. I was born the day before St. Martin's day and christened, that means given my Christian name, on St. Martin's day so my name was Martin. That simple and quite convenient, and I imagine it would allay the concerns of relatives who lobby for a choice of name in the family, etc. It's all very simple, wait until the child is born and look at the calendar. That settles it.

We prayed to St. Anne, I say. St. Anne was the closest heavenly being in our home. We prayed to St. Anne that she would appeal to the Virgin Mary; that she, in turn, would appeal to the Blessed Son; that he, in turn, would appeal to the unwilling and angry

Father God to answer our prayer. What a list of intermediaries and how little we knew of a gracious heavenly Father, or even a gracious Son.

Reared in such a home, soon sent to grammar school. There were no free public schools in those days. Any schooling was the result of money spent by parents for the purpose. Grammar schools meant the study of Latin grammar. All learning was presented in Latin so the prerequisite for studies in any discipline was possession of the Latin. Imagine, later learning Greek and being taught Greek in Latin. Whatever language you spoke at home, this is the way people to come from many different countries to a common university and not have to worry about understanding the lectures because they had all been taught Latin grammar in whatever country they were reared, and thus able to attend.

Latin grammar in the city of Magdeburg and then at 14, I was sent to live with relatives in the city of Eisenach in preparation for the attendance at university. I, in Eisenach, became acquainted with a godly noblewoman, Cotta was her name. She enjoyed my singing. She was a matron, a house frau. She enjoyed hearing me sing in the streets at night and I would accompany myself with my lute and she would often give me supper in gratitude for my singing. I must tell you, I had a tenor voice. You may think that's strange. My friends said I sang well and I never saw reason to challenge their judgment. I enjoyed music as a gift of God and as an instrument of the communication of the message of God in this world.

Then soon, entrance to the university. The University of Erfurt, not an ancient university, a relatively new one, but well established. A university city to which people came from many different countries. Now the attendance at the university then was with the common baccalaureate program, that is, one did not choose a major on the undergraduate level. We all studied the same basic course in the liberal arts, as you would say, and I proceeded in that direction, performed creditably, not exceptionally in either direction but creditably, and seriously, and particularly seriously as I became gradually conscious of the fact of eternity. It was during those college years that I witnessed the death of a college friend, a young man, like myself, taken in youth, like myself, and I was much impressed with the realization that eternity could be very near and that I was very unready for such an entrance. I was sobered by that experience. One of the first intimations of the moving of the Spirit of God upon my immortal soul.

I concluded that course and now must make preparation for the next step, the next degree. What shall I master? What discipline shall I choose as the profession in which my life shall be engaged? In that time, only three professions were open, available: medicine, law and theology. Those who were practiced well in each of those disciplines were the teachers of each of those disciplines. And my father had no doubt about what I should major in. I have been accustomed to obeying my father but I was now at a crossroads of life in which decisions were coming into conflict potentially between my will and my earthly father's will. I was not yet greatly concerned about my heavenly Father's will, that was to come.

My father decided that I should become a student of law. He had multiple motivations for this decision. The law was a lucrative profession. It was an up-and-coming important area. Feudalism was rapidly declining in the German states which had declined much earlier elsewhere in Europe. Germany was backward in many respects in that time. Necessary drawing up of deeds and various decrees, writs of law, were necessary. There was much business for a lawyer in this time. My father also made it clear that he wished to be well cared for by his firstborn son in his own old age, and he thought that this profession would enable his son, Martin, so to do. Whatever be the more prominent motivation, I was now to assume that I was to study law.

My father acquired for me at some considerable cost, a newly published copy of standard medieval textbook for the study of law, the "Corpus Juris Civilis" of Justinian, compiled back in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Some few of you will remember that from your studies. Those studies for some of you are less distant in the past than for others, it is obvious to observe. Justinian, 6<sup>th</sup> century Emperor of Constantinople codified Roman law and it was now through the miracle of movable type printing, accessible in bound printed form. It was a major textbook. It was the textbook and the acquisition of it was at no little cost by my father for his promising son.

I proceeded upon this course of study but trouble was brewing some six inches below the collarbone on my left side. There was a controversy, a turmoil, within. My father's will I was obeying. My own will was not surrendered to this. I was no sure this is what I wanted to do. I was not asking yet, I say, whether this was what God wanted me to do, but I was in trouble over the matter.

I had begun the course and then chose to do what university and college students for centuries since have chosen on occasion to do, I took cups for a week. I went home to consider, to reconsider, to meditate upon, to ask myself. I could not discuss it with my parents. Their will was known to me. I was no pleasant companion during those days at home. There was an inner conflict and inability to describe it or discuss it.

The days passed and I had to return and while returning, the event that you remember was to turn the direction of my days and years, occurred in a matter of nature. While walking back to the town, occasionally riding in a cart for some portion, I was caught in a thunderstorm, lightning and thunder. I cannot describe to you in words you will understand the abject terror which this meant in my century. Here was evidence nature at war with earth. Here was turmoil in the heavens. All certainty and security of the canopy of the heavens was rent and riven not so much by rain as by sound and sight. In darkness, flashes of light. In quietness, rolling thunder. I did not have what all of you have, of knowledge of science and meteorology, and wind currents, and highs and lows, and weathermen. I don't know what I'm talking about. No one else did in my time and ignorance contributed to fear, and fear of this dimension was paralyzing.

I was afraid of dying in the midst of this storm and made a bargain in that instant of abject terror, I made a bargain with heaven, "Help me, St. Anne! I'll become a monk!" And the two clauses in this vow were significant reflections and prophecies. Reflection,

St. Anne was the nearest heavenly being, I have said. It was she to whom I appealed for succour and protection, and the greatest bargain, the greatest sacrifice I could make was to surrender my life, its ambitions, its hopes, its future. How much that had been being considered in my soul, I cannot answer, but that moment reflected and presented a clear release from the turmoil. "I will die to self, to ambition, to hope, to prosperity, to life itself, if you will let me live!"

The storm subsided. I returned, having taken refuge under a tree, I remind you. You know a very stupid thing to do, which really increased the likelihood of my disaster. But God spared my life. Now the vow had been made and must remain only to be fulfilled.

I returned to Erfurt, announced to both university and friends my intent and proceeded to implement that intent. I gave a brief dinner in the tavern for my friends. Very slight, I mean, it was by your terms fast-food in terms of cost. I was unable to do more. Gave away my earthly possessions. Gave away my copy of the Justinian code of law, which when my father heard about, was not at all pleased. My father was quick to remind me of the commandment which says, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the earth." He was sure that my failure to have done that would mark the brevity of my days, therefore. He was not reconciled to this son of his until many years later when a monk married a nun and when grandchildren subsequently arrived. Then he was reconciled. I was later to say, "I took a wife to please my father, to tease the Pope, and to vex the devil." That was to come.

I gave away my possessions and entered the Augustinian cloister of the city of Erfurt. True to my vow and almost with some sense of relief at no longer having to settle the question of academia, entered this monastery, notable monastery for its severity, for its seriousness, for its intent to uphold the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and these were to be unqualified and absolute vows. They were made to men. I later was released from them by my monastic superior and on the basis that they were made to men.

This monastery had a good reputation. It was called the Black Cloister, not only because of the black garment, the black habit that the monks wore, but also because of the seriousness and the sober countenance of the monks there. It has been said somewhat facetiously, there was no monkey-business in that monastery. It was a very serious place.

I proceeded with great energy to do all that the monastic life provided for the solace of my immortal soul. I entered with energy upon the opportunity to win the favor of God by putting under my body. I did all I could to abase my physical self. With a rope belt which encircled my habit, the ends of which knotted hung to the ankles, I would take them and use them as whips upon my own back. I scrubbed stone floors on my knees so much that calluses grew on those knees, less from praying than from scrubbing stone floors, in order to win favor with God, stones that were already clean. I would confess my sins. I would imagine sins to confess. I would confess sins I had not committed in hopes of gaining greater favor with God. I was serious and I set about with great energy, I say, to effect the development of my sense of righteousness before God who demands righteousness.

The first time I saw a complete copy of the Holy Bible was at the age of 20 in the university library. A Latin Bible 20 years old. It was to become my textbook, but til then it had been an unknown to me.

Periodically, the superintendent of the monasteries in the region made his rounds visiting them to make sure things were going well, to deal with any problems that had emerged, to consider the circumstances that were arising, and Father Schtalpitz was his name. He came to my monastery and asked the appropriate questions of the Abbot, the head monk, and asked what any difficulties, problems, etc. and he discovered that there was a major problem, his name was Brother Martin. I had been a trouble, I say, and the Abbot, whose name was Martin also, had clearly observed it, so he asked Father Schtalpitz to talk with me. We walked in the monastery garden, sat on a bench amidst the flowers, and he kindly and softly asked me, "My son, what is the problem? Can I help you?" I accepted the gentleness of his inquiry and responded quite openly and told him that, "I have no peace with God. There is no solace for my soul. I must be righteous in order to be accepted by God but I'm not righteous. I know I'm not righteous. I'm a sinner. God condemns sin. And I'm expected to love God and obey God but I don't love God. I fear God. I fear him as an angry judge waiting to condemn me, and yet I know he made me and I'm, in effect, blaming him for what I am, and I know that's blasphemous. I'm in a strait and I need help." And Father Schtalpitz did not berate me, did not really seek to theologize me. He said simply, "My son, you must learn also to trust God. You must learn to believe God." And I cannot tell you how strangely those words fell on my ears. I was supposed to obey and I was supposed to love and I did not love, and all my efforts to obey were unsatisfying, but now Schtalpitz did not himself walk in the path he pointed me toward, but he was used of God to point me in a good direction. This was help but not yet, and not altogether.

He retained interest in me and did more to help me. The next thing he did was to determine that I should become an ordained priest. Now, I had been a college graduate and I was a monk. That combination was most unusual. One entered a monastery or he went to university, he didn't do both. So the course of additional study to become ordained a priest was very brief. I had to learn to perform the Mass. I had to learn the Latin of the Mass. I had to learn the principles with which the priest assigns works of satisfaction to the penitent confessor in the confessional, and it was only a year later that I was ordained a priest.

This was a highlight in the family of any Roman Catholic home. My father came and was present and was not altogether clear as to his feelings. He was proud on the one hand and yet he had not yet gotten over my having abandoned law. But he was present. I had a great deal of difficulty performing that first Mass. I trembled at the elevation of the cup. What a thing, that a mortal man, a sinful man, should present as a sacrifice the blood of Christ, should make, create and offer the blood of Christ, should take a wafer of fish food and present it as the body of Christ. This was beyond my understanding.

The next thing Schtalpitz did for me was to send me to a newly established university, there to join the faculty of Wittenberg. Wittenberg on the edge of civilization. It was literally at the extreme border of the old Roman Empire. It was a city I did not like. It was a city on the Elbe River. It was a city which literally stank. It continually exuded a fragrance which only permanent residents could endure. It had two fragrant industries: one was beer brewing, and the other was salt mining. Either one alone adequately odoriferous, but the two together, remarkably so.

I did not like the town but my Prince Elector, Duke Frederick, Frederick the Wise as he was known, had established this new university with the new renaissance concept of humanism which meant then going back to the sources of every academic discipline, so studying not medieval commentators but original writers of ancient classic and religious themes. This was a novelty then.

I was first assigned the Chair of Moral Philosophy. I did not know what it meant but studied enough to teach one day ahead of my students. Then, more graciously, the Chair of Biblical Theology. Now for the first time, you find this strange but for the first time at this university, the Bible was going to become the textbook in theology class. In the previous centuries, what had been studied was medieval commentators: Aquinas, Bonaventure, Abelard, Anselm, and a host of others, and we read and learned, it was customary to read and learn what others had said about what God had said. What a novelty, this, to make the Bible the textbook in Bible class. You think it not so but it was.

Before proceeding farther with that, Father Schtalpitz sent me on another errand as another effort to allay my concerns. He sent me on a journey to Rome, the city of the Caesars, the city of the Popes, the city of Seven Hills, the center of the organizational structure of the Church of Rome. He was sure that if I went there and saw all that was there and made use of all the opportunities for spiritual benefit there, surely my doubts would dissolve.

It was a journey of several months on foot, stopping at monasteries en route, accompanied with a couple of others. The winter of 1510, the spring of 1511, finally crossing the Alps, coming down upon the city and looking from a hill above it, upon it, overjoyed at the journey's end and exulting in the opportunities which lay before. But strangely, those expectations were unrealized as I saw the flippancy with which Italian priests performed the Mass. They got through five Masses to my one. They, I heard them say, "This is bread and bread it will remain. This is wine and wine it will remain," when, in fact, they were supposed to be saying that one was turned to the body and blood of Christ.

I was appalled at this carelessness and, further, saw the Pope paraded through the streets on the shoulders of four men on a litter. I could have reached out and touched Pope Julius II. I saw the Holy Stairs, by tradition carried from Jerusalem to Rome, stairs which led to, by tradition, to Pilate's judgment hall, stairs up which Christ climbed for his mock trial. I saw people on their knees climbing those steps.

I went to every opportunity in the city and I regretted I did not yet have more relatives in purgatory to benefit from the indulgences which were so easily acquired in that place, but this did not solve the problem of my heart yet, and I went home from Rome. In words I later described, I said, "I went to Rome with onions on my breath, I returned from Rome with garlic on my breath," and I was not describing Italian cuisine. I was in many respects conscious that I was worse off for what I had experienced there. My confidence in the Papal institution was not increased but quite to the contrary.

Now to biblical theology. The Bible my textbook. I wrote out manuscript lectures. I once woke in the middle of the night with a nightmare that I had gone into my lectern without my manuscript and I awoke in a frightful sweat. I was speechless without my manuscript, at least then.

I had determined to go through the Bible in the lectures one book at a time, one book a semester, and started, naturally, with Genesis. Abandoned that project when at the end of that first semester I had not completed beyond chapter 3 of the book of Genesis. This, obviously, required a re-examination of the method. There remained yet much to be covered. So in subsequent semesters and in my own studies, I paid special attention to certain books, Genesis was one of them. The Psalms engaged me for many months and many sermons as well. And of course, the epistles, particularly those of Paul. Galatians especially was close to my heart. It seemed to reflect my own turmoil and I could empathize with the apostle.

I had read the text which you heard read this evening and was, at first, more repelled by it than drawn by the Spirit of God to it. I read, "Herein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the just shall live by faith." I understood that to mean that I must be as righteous and God is righteous. I must have the righteousness of God and then I can live by faith. Until then, I must earn and work toward that righteousness. It repelled me, I say, before it drew me.

Sometime between 1512, my return from Rome, and 1517 when an event forced an outward moment, I came to an understanding. I cannot date it exactly. In my tower study, I came to understand as Scripture became its own best interpreter for this monk, priest, MA, and dying sinner. I came to Psalm 31. I found there David in flight from Saul at the extremity of his possibilities, beyond any strength of his own, nothing he could do, pleading with heaven, "Preserve me, O Lord, for in thee do I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed. Deliver me in thy righteousness." And this phrase, "thy righteousness," was for me the opening of the meaning of the righteousness of God as God's righteousness rather than mine worked up, achieved. I saw that I had been going about to establish my own righteousness when it was freely given for my redemption by the finished work of Jesus Christ. This was eureka, I have found it! I did not like the ancient Greek run through the streets out of my bathtub, but I had an equal rejoicing that I had come to comprehend.

There is a text which more than any other describes the course of my days upon this passing earth. The text is found in the word of the servant of the patriarch who was sent

to find a bride for the patriarch's son. Having found her and now relating it to his host, this servant, perhaps Eliezer, says, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." Not in the way in the sense of a difficulty, but in the course of the path of God's leading. I did not know where I was going. I did not know what the future would hold. I did not know the direction of my days or years, but he was leading me. I said it was as if there were a hand pushing me from behind and as if one had placed horse blinders on my eyes, that I could see neither to the left nor to the right of me, but only forward.

This confidence now born was soon to find expression. This was the occasion: it was the rather generous indulgence which the Pope of Rome offered to the German people in order to raise money from them with which to build a replacement for the ancient Church of St. Peter in Rome, built by order of Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, well beyond the need for replacement. A new basilica of St. Peter. And the Italian Pope felt it was a privilege he was giving to the Germans to provide the money for this. Some of the German princes did not see it that way. One of them was my own Prince Frederick. He forbade the announcement of the indulgence in his electoral Saxony where Wittenberg was located, but the neighboring province of ducal Saxony accepted them, so my people could cross the border a few miles distant and acquire these indulgences. These were certificates presumably authorized by the Pope purporting to offer release or remission of partial or plenary, full, sentence one must serve in the place of punishment after death called in Roman Catholic theology, and it exists nowhere else, purgatory. A purge-atory. A place of purging of the remaining punishments, the consequences of sins performed in life.

In the theory of indulgences, these applied only to sins whose guilt has been confessed in the confessional to the priest. They were not licenses to sin promiscuously, though they were so interpreted by many people. They were to care for the temporal punishment since the church had taken care of only the guilt.

Every sin produced two consequences: guilt and punishment. Every crime produces those two consequences. No Romanist could sing, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe." The best he could sing is, "Jesus paid one-half." I speak as a fool. A full and complete remission of guilt and punishment, Jesus paid it all.

The Dominican monk who pedaled these certificates did great harm to his own church. He was later disciplined by the Pope and consigned to a monastery for perpetual penance. He made the impression as he hawked these certificates that as soon as the sound of the coin is heard in the money chest, which was presided over by the bankers who got their cut because they had advanced the money with which the Archbishop had purchased a third archbishopric, you can add up the sins this all represents, they got their cut. As he said, "As soon as the sound of the coin is heard in the chest, a soul flies up to heavenly rest. Step right up, folks, who will be first? Who of you is so cold-hearted that he would permit his poor suffering grandparent to languish in the pains of purgatory when for a mere penny one can release that soul?"

This was oversimplification. It was not true. This was applicable only to sins that had been confessed in the confessional and so forth, but the people flocked and I came upon one of my own parishioners in his own sin, and I berated him and he responded to me with great confidence, "It's alright, Dr. Luther," he said as he pulled out of his tunic a certificate of indulgence, "I have an indulgence signed by the Pope himself! I'm alright!" And I was incensed with German anger and with soul pain, and I went to my study and I said, "I'll put a hole in Tetzels drum!" And I wrote a few questions for debate, one of them read, "If the Pope has the power to release souls from purgatory, why does he not out of his evangelical charity, simply declare purgatory empty rather than for filthy lucre dispense indulgences?" There were others of the same vein, soon 95 of them altogether. Theses for debate. Questions. Not pronouncements, not assertions of heresy but considerations for scholars to debate. They remained unanswered.

They were sent to the Bishop. They were written in Latin. Somebody put them on the church door at Wittenberg. Somebody had them translated into German, an enterprising printer spread them all over Germany in expensively in half-sheets of paper. There were no copyright laws in those days and no royalties either. And soon I said it was as if angels were my couriers, so rapidly were my words dispersed throughout the land. That was October 31, 1517, the birthday of what became the Protestant Reformation. I didn't know that. I did not intend that but so it was. The day before All Saints day when all the saints were honored in case we had missed any throughout the year. Collections of relics were put on display, especially in Frederick's Castle Church there in Wittenberg.

It is a remarkable testimony to God's providence that there was on the throne of the Papacy in Rome at the time of this publication a Pope who knew not the first thing about things religious. I did not say spiritual, religious. Leo X, the Medici Pope, the Renaissance Pope, a man of great love of learning and art and good wine and good food and beautiful pictures, and he posed for portraits by Raphael. He was interested in everything but what should have been expected primarily. Had there been a strong Pope, a serious Pope at the time, what might have been.

What providence this, the providence of movable type printing available for the rapid dissemination of new thought, and an ignorant Pope on the throne of Rome, and tardy ecclesiastical response to the theses. The first time they were actually debated was at Heidelberg the next year by some fellow Augustinian monks, not by high placed churchmen who smelled heresy here. There were brief meetings with ecclesiastical officials to effect my recantation without success, and then finally two years later, a formal debate at the University of Leipzig. Leipzig and Wittenberg were rivals. Their rivalry at least approached that of your football rivalries in your land in your century, and their champion was Dr. Eck of Ingolstadt who was the greatest German theologian of the time in the church of Rome, and he indirectly agreed to debate me.

He sent the invitation to my bumbling colleague, Dr. Karlstadt, who needed to carry his library with him in a cart in a wagon when we went to Leipzig for the debate. He was loquacious and imprecise and slow and bumbling, I repeat, and Eck was quickly able to dispatch him and somewhat agitated waiting for the main event. Then he finally declared,

"Is anyone else present who would like to take up the debate?" And I was chomping at the bit waiting for the opportunity and I came forth and he proceeded, he spent 10 minutes establishing his argument, quoting from the church fathers and the doctors, and I would listen. On the way one morning, this event lasted three weeks, this event, this debate, an oratorical was specially composed for the event. It was an artist series program that went on for three weeks and it was with cheering on both sides and so forth, contingents from Wittenberg and the home team here from Leipzig, and on the way one morning to the assembly hall, I was handed by a kind little girl, a little nosegay, a small clutchful, a handful of little blue flowers like bachelor buttons or something, miniature carnation looking, and she gave them to me. I graciously received them and enjoyed the fragrance of them and during the debate as I listened to Eck, I sniffed at them, and I wore a highly polished signet ring, no stone, just a metal ring with an initial, and the morning sun streaming through the window caught that as I was listening, I was quite seriously listening to his arguments and so forth, and then I would reply with 30 seconds of a text from Paul the apostle. I would demolish his argument. "You have spoken wisely and well and profoundly citing authorities, but St. Paul says," and I would blast his argument. This was agitating. He was getting hot under his clerical collar. Finally, there was a rumbling in the audience suspecting that there was some demonic inspiration coming because the sun was beaming off this and flashes of sunlight were dancing across the walls. They must be demons inspiring me because nobody knows the Bible that well and to be able to respond so quickly. It was an age of superstition.

Finally, unable to answer the arguments, he resorted ad hominem to attacking the arguer, and came down with a devastating blow, charging me, "Luther, you sound like a Hussite!" Now, I knew that Jan Hus, who is planning to visit you next week, had been condemned and burned as a heretic 100 years earlier for what I did not know, but at the Council at Constance, he had been condemned and burned as a damnable heretic, and burning was an object lesson of the flames of hell to which the heretic is progressing. And I was incensed at the charge. I'm no heretic. Until during the break between the next session, I checked up and found out what Hus actually taught and discovered that he agreed with me, therefore, obviously he was right and the Council was wrong in having burned him. I had been ignorant of the history. Do you see my weakness? I didn't know history and having learned it, I was able to make a judgment that was more accurate and I came back and acknowledged, "A Hussite I am! Hus was right, the Council was wrong! Thank you very much. I no longer have any confidence in the church Council. It is obvious they have erred." This was a great advancement to my understanding but it was a great loss in the debate. I lost the debate, as it were, but won the understanding which was to be far more important.

After 1519, the debate comes, 1520, the year of many writings which were to become the fodder for my judgment in 1521. When 1521 arrived in April, I was summonsed to the Imperial Diet, the Parliament meeting at Worms in April, summoned by the Emperor at the instigation of the ecclesiastical officials to be heard. In the previous winter, I had been condemned as a heretic by the church. I had received the Papal Bull of Condemnation and rather than responding to it, the 60 days it gave me in which to recant, I had it publicly burned at 9 o'clock in the morning on December 10 of 1520, and my students

threw in other ecclesiastical documents expressing their agreement with me, pictures of Leo X, the Pope, and other things. Immediately, the Pope issues the Bull of Excommunication, January, 1521. That meant I was expelled from the possibility of heaven. Now all that remained was that I be handed over to the secular arm for judgment, temporal judgment, and that was what was to be considered at the Diet of Worms in April.

I arrived on a Tuesday. The next day, the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, appeared before the Council, the Diet, and was shown on a bench copies of all my writings indiscriminately presented, writings some of which were expositions on the Catechism and the Confession of Faith on the Lord's Prayer and so forth, that were in no sense critical of the teachings of Rome. They agreed with us on them. And other writings in which I had been very critical of the Pope and his people. And I was asked if these were mine and I looked them over quickly, "Of course they are mine. I wrote them, yes." "Will you retract their contents?" That was the second question. It was not what I intended, nor what I expected. I expected not truly to be heard, shown the issues where I had erred, if I indeed have erred. I was unprepared for such an answer and said so, and asked for time to consider not whether or not I would recant but how to frame an answer appropriate to this moment. And they gave me 24 hours. I spent the night in the inn in prayer. I did not write a speech. I did not really contemplate what I would say. I prayed to my heavenly Father that he who had promised that when I was brought before magistrates he would give me in that hour what I needed to say; that he would, indeed, honor his word in which I trusted.

The next morning, at 10 o'clock in the morning, the same two questions and to the second one, I proceeded to emphasize the fact that there were different classes of writings here and you are indiscriminately asking me to disavow them all. Think of what you're saying. You want me to say that some of the things I wrote about what you agree with was wrong, and you don't really mean... And they were not pleased with having pointed out the obvious, and they insisted that I give them a simple answer. You ask of me a simple answer. I will give you one. Unless I am shown by clear proofs from the Scriptures and by right reason, regenerated reason, not just sophistry, where I have erred, I will retract nothing for it is manifest that Popes and Councils have erred, and my conscience is captive to the word of God. To go against conscience thus captive is neither right nor is it safe, meaning sane. I stand here, God help me. Amen.

It was not said in a bombastic stentorian proclamation. It was very serious and sober but it was heard, and it was heard to the degree that the secretaries assigned to put down the minute of everything that was done, the acts of the Diet, had dropped their quills and all was silent. And to my friends sitting beside me, I looked for succour and encouragement and found them with faces of absolute despair, "You've done it now. Surely the goose is cooked now." And I was incensed at their despair when I needed succour, and I said, "What else can I do? I stand here," and by then the secretaries had picked up their quills and were trying to recapitulate the concluding remarks and they put it all together so it comes out now in nice stentorian conclusion, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." Well, that sounds good and that was the sense of what was said in conclusion, but the record is somewhat dulled in the exaction.

I did not wait for the conclusion of the matter. I went back to my lodging and my friends insisted that the safe conduct under which I had come to Worms be honored both in arrival and return. The safe conduct offered to Jan Hus a 100 years before had proved to be a one way ticket only and the ecclesiastical officials had temporized with the Emperor then, Sigismund, back in 1415, and said, "You have no need to keep your word to a condemned heretic." Well, now this could have been the Emperor's out but he was a man of greater honor than Sigismund in this respect at least, and he honored. He gave me 21 days to return home under safe conduct.

After my departure, a rump Diet, those who had supported me, left. The princes who had supported me not theologically but politically, they agreed with the tone of my voice I was standing up to ecclesiastical authority in which the state was in collusion, they had left. And so with a rump Diet, a ban on Luther was declared and that meant that anybody could put me to death at anytime and be rewarded by the Emperor for doing so. I died, in fact, 25 years later a natural death in my bed under the imperial ban, but died a natural death, and I emphasized the truth that every man or woman in the will of God is immortal until God has finished the work he intends for him to do.

On my way home, I was kidnapped by my friends. By my friends unknown to me. They were very rough when they accosted our wagons and took me bound to the Wartburg Castle. Only then did I discover I was among friends and I had been kidnapped for my own protection. I spent 11 months in the Wartburg Castle in disguise. Grew a beard. Wore armor and was known as Knight George. Some pieces of furniture from my own time remained in that cell, that room, a tower room overlooking valleys and mountains in great distance. Most of that was destroyed by fire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One item alone remains, a large neural or a knee of a tree, which I used as a footstool. That is still in the room in your time and is the only thing there from my time. I spent that 11 months translating the New Testament into German, making Paul speak German, and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Peter and all the others as well, and did unwittingly for my own nation what Chaucer had done for English, what Dante had done for Italian, made the high German a literary language and I was unaware that I was doing that. What I wanted to do was put the Scriptures in the hands of my people.

In my absence from Wittenberg, hotheads were taking over, iconoclasts, Schwermer, the Zwickau prophets who claimed special revelations. They were radicals going too fast, too far, and I asked for permission, in fact, the City Council wrote me asking me to return. Doing so put me under jeopardy, to be sure, but I cared not. And I went back to Wittenberg, preached sermons on moderation for eight days and restored a degree of order.

In 1525, some nine nuns left a convent in a neighboring town and came to Wittenberg for protection and we decided it was important to find a husband for each of these nuns, and we were successful with all but one of them, and she would not have him whom we had chosen for her. Dr. Glotz was to marry her by our arrangement and she said, "No, thank you." And we were incensed that she was so ungrateful for our brokering here, and we

said, "Well then, whom do you want? Who would you take?" And she looked at me and I insisted that that was impossible. I was under the ban. I could be put to death at any day. I will not lead you to a marriage altar and then to a funeral bier. I said, "No," and she said, "Yes." And we were married in June of 1525 and there was established thereby the Protestant Pastor's Home, the opposition to the concept of the celibate clergy as impractical, as unwise, as unbiblical, and as a result, the concept of a home as a place of refuge and refreshment and restoration, a place of peace, a place of the rearing of the next generation, a mutuality, a joyful retreat, this pattern was first wholesomely reestablished by the marriage of this monk priest and Katie, my rib, Pope Kate, I called her. She ran the household and it was a good thing, I would have given away everything we had. I took care of matters spiritual, she took care of things temporal.

The Lord gave us six children, three girls, three boys. Two of the three girls died, one of them, Magdalena, died at 14 in her father's arms. I remember asking her, "Dear Elena, are you willing to go to your heavenly Father who loves you even more than your earthly father?" And she said weakly, "As God wills, my father." And we tenderly laid her away. Hans was my rebel son. He was a naughty boy and I wrote him letters when I was away, encouraging him to obey his mother and to be good. I told him about a garden I imagined, the keeper of which said that this is a garden where good little children come and can play; a garden of apples and oranges and pears and nuts. And I asked the gardener if my little Hans could come and play in that garden, and he said, "Yes, if he learns his Catechism. If he recites his verses. If he obeys his parents." And I said, "Oh dear Hans, I would like you to be able to play in that garden." There was a tenderness in the midst of the boldness that often was more evident than the former.

She was God's best earthly gift to this priest and often instructed me most wisely, like when I came upon her one day after having been at odds with myself and with the movement and things were not going well and I was upset and I was a bear to live with for two or three days, and one day I came home and saw her weeping in the room, sitting weeping, and I was solicitous, "What's the trouble, my dear? What?" "Oh, dear husband, have you not heard?" "Heard what?" "Our God in heaven is dead." "No, he's not dead," I blustered. I was the theologian of the moment and she said, "Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that. The way you've been acting lately, I was sure our heavenly Father had died." It was a very submissive rebuke from a loving wife.

Then on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February in 1546, I having been in the way and having been led out of ignorance into understanding, out of sin into salvation, out of darkness into light, out of turmoil into peace, was at last led out of this life to a better. I being in the way the Lord led me.

God uses human instruments who are often unaware of their being used beyond the moment of their time, but a sovereign God turns the faithful service of common men and women into everlasting benefit to millions whom he never knew.

God be praised. Amen.