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**A0743 – October 28, 2007 – Rom 1:16-17 – October 31, 1517**

I want to break from James today, to share with you something that I discovered a couple of years ago in my studies, something that duly impressed me to the point that it is time, as well as timely, that I share it with you. This week, in fact, this Wednesday, Oct 31, the world will celebrate a holiday; I prefer to call it an un-holiday. Now, there's nothing wrong with the day per se, days are days, some people magnify one day over another and others see them all alike, but the Lord has made each day, so every day is His day. But the celebration that will be held that day by so many people around the world, that is what I call an un-holiday. Halloween, short for "All-Hallows-Even" the eve before All Saints Day. The ancient Gael's said it was on Halloween the spirits of the dead come to life and wreak havoc, causing sickness and damaged crops. So they dressed up in evil costumes to mimic or placate the spirits. Now, that doctrine is completely contrary to Scripture. The spirits of the dead don't roam about. Now, there are spirits that roam about but they are not human spirits, they are demonic spirits. So, I'm not saying that you can't have contact with spirits, there is such a thing, but it will not be your aunt or your grandfather or any other human spirit, it will be a demon, and some people are deep in the occult and they have contact with these demons who ruin them, destroy them, control them, it's a terrible thing that they open themselves up to these things. But, there is no calling forth from the grave any human spirit. So, many families have rightly seen that this is an unholy observance, an un-holiday, and have, very mindfully and kindly provided an alternative, something like a Fall Festival; a place where you can take your children and play games, paint pumpkins, have food and fun, enjoy the cool fall weather. And there's nothing wrong with a Fall Festival. But shouldn't we pause and ask? Is there any historically significant event, any event brought about by the Providential Hand of God that occurred on that day? Has God, in His great plan for world history given us

an event so significant that it merits our attention that day? He has. And for many years certain churches of various Protestant denominations, particularly the Lutheran and Reformed denominations have celebrated it the Sunday before Oct 31, unless of course it fell on Oct 31. It is an event that merits our scrutiny, an event that merits our attention, an event which should evoke us to worship God. An event so significant, had it not occurred, I would venture to say that the United States of America would not exist. That you and I, if we were born, would be European not American and Roman Catholic not Protestant.

Let me trace this for you and I want to start with that which is known by you and move to the unknown. I want to take you from American history to European history through a series of questions. Who do we learn in the history books were some of the earliest settlers on the North American? They came over on the Mayflower in 1620. The Pilgrims, and who were the Pilgrims? They were Puritans, they were from England. They had fled England to Holland and then some English investors helped them establish the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. But who are the Puritans? Well, the Puritans were Protestants, they were not Catholics, they were the theological ancestors of John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Calvin and many other protestant reformers. More about the Protestant Reformers in a moment. But why did they come? Why did they come to America, what was known at the time as New England? Because they were not satisfied with the old England. They were not satisfied with the Church of England. They had a Church-State system and they believed the practices of the Church of England were unscriptural. So they worked to purify it but eventually they had to separate from it and when they did they became very hostile toward it. “They attacked” it “as ‘popish,’ superstitious, anti-Christian, and idolatrous.”<sup>i</sup> So, they set out to reform the Church of England, to distance her from Roman Catholicism, one of the cries of Reformation theology is *semper reformanda*, “always reforming” but the Church of England didn’t want to reform so the Puritans separated, they came to New England, America to establish a place of religious freedom, a place where religion was not controlled by human government.<sup>ii</sup> So, something happened historically, something happened that had a dramatic effect in the lives of those 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans, something so big that it sent these Puritans sailing across the Atlantic Ocean in 1620, to a land where they hoped to enjoy religious freedom, and by ‘religious’ they meant Christianity, not the hodge-podge you see today. The Puritans were

against all the external vestments, the adornment of the clergy, the relics, all the sensual things. They argued that true Christianity was not about external rituals but inner purity, true biblical worship, a life of holiness where the believer is transformed from death in sin to life in Christ through faith. And they wanted to build a righteous, civil society and so they came to America to do just that. Now, isn't it striking to compare their excellent purpose and goal with present reality? Well, what was it that happened in history that so moved this people to uproot their families from all things common and sail thousands of miles into the unknown? What would it take for you to do such a thing? They didn't have airplanes, they would have to take women and children on boats in a long voyage across the ocean, danger in the high seas, not even proper sewage.

What fueled them to do it? What current of thought carried them to America? Ideas have powerful consequences and the ideas that brought the Puritans to America to build a godly culture were the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, not the Enlightenment, not some autonomous rationalism where we base everything on human reason but *sola scriptura*, where our lives our everything are based on scripture and scripture alone. Now, let me explain these two terms I've mentioned, Protestant Reformation. Let's start with the latter. By Reformation is meant the attempts by godly men to reform the Roman Catholic Church in the 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. These people were Roman Catholics, they were raised in the Roman Catholic Church and they saw abuses and they wanted to see those abuses corrected, particular among them was the German Reformer, Martin Luther. He had no intention of separating from the Roman Catholic Church, but merely to reform it. To do this, on Oct 31, 1517 he nailed the 95 Theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg. Now, you have to understand that this was the normal and orderly way of having a learned, academic disputation. He did not do this to cause problems. He may have been a little naïve but he certainly did not intend to create problems. He chose Oct 31 because many professors and students were coming to town to see the large collection of relics held there on All Saints Day and he wanted to discuss these things with them. He also sent notices to the Archbishop of Mainz and the Bishop of his Diocese. What he was concerned about, what these 95 theses are about are indulgences. Indulgences, in Luther's day, was revenue stirred up by the Pope and those authorized by him to expand the Holy Roman Empire. They would sell documents granting entrance to heaven or release of souls from purgatory.

That's why the document is actually called "Disputation on the Virtue of Indulgences". He thought it was wrong what they were doing, that it was abusing the doctrine of indulgences. Now, you say, "That's a strange topic", but it was a Catholic issue, not strange at all in that day. But here's the deal, Luther wrote the Theses in Latin because the scholastic language of the day was Latin, the Bible was in Latin and it wasn't till a few years later that Erasmus got a Greek testament together and Luther translated the first German Bible and Tyndale the first English Bible and so on. So, His 95 Theses were in Latin and people couldn't read Latin so his followers went door to door and explained them to people and people listened with great eagerness because they were the subjects of the abuses. Luther argued that they were keeping the people from the grace of God shown in Jesus Christ; he felt that what was happening was dishonoring to the Pope and he wanted it brought to the attention of the Pope. At the time Luther was immature in his doctrine. When he published the 95 Theses in book form, 30 years later (1545), he said in the preface, "I allow them to stand, that by them it may appear how weak I was, and in what a fluctuating state of mind, when I began this business. I was then a monk and a mad papist (*papista insanissimus*), and so submersed in the dogmas of the Pope that I would have readily murdered any person who denied obedience to the Pope."<sup>iii</sup> But in them is the seed of Luther's new theology, a theology that is a return to the Scriptures as the final authority. They bring the personal experience of justification by faith, and direct intercourse with Christ and the gospel, in opposition to an external system of churchly and priestly mediation and human merit. The papal opponents felt the logical drift of the Theses much better than Luther, and saw in them an attempt to undermine the whole fabric of popery. The irresistible progress of the Reformation soon swept the indulgences away as an unscriptural, mediaeval tradition of men.<sup>iv</sup>

Well, no one showed up for the disputation, but "The Theses were copied, translated, printed, and spread as on angels' wings throughout Germany and Europe in a few weeks."<sup>v</sup> Little did Luther know that his nailing 95 Theses on a Church door in Wittenberg would be the spark that set the whole world on fire! While this event marks the beginning of that fire there were others that came before him. There were the followers of John Wycliffe who translated the Latin Vulgate into the first edition of the English Bible in 1383. He became known as "the Morning Star of the Reformation". There was John Hus and his followers, the Hussites, in the 1400's. But, with all these things

happening, Luther did not know that the nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg on Oct 31<sup>st</sup> would become known as “Reformation Day”, little did he know that that day would mark the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern age, little did he know that day would mark the end of Roman Catholic reign and the beginning of Protestantism, the end of State controlled churches and the beginning of Christian liberty, the end of a man-centered theology and the beginning of a God-centered theology, the end of tradition and reason as the final authority and the beginning of the Scriptures and revelation as the final authority. It was these ideas that influenced the Puritans to uproot their family from home and country and start anew in a new world which grew into the United States of America. And it is the seedbed of a true biblical theology, a theology propounded week after week from this pulpit, that a man is justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. That there is no treasure chest of merit in heaven, merit stored up by Mary, Jesus, the apostles or other saints that can be dispensed to us through the seven sacraments. Nor can we pay the Church to save souls from purgatory who are held captive there until the Pope releases them. There is no such doctrine of seven sacraments as requirements to receive grace or souls in purgatory that can be bought. Justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Now, let’s see how Martin Luther came to this understanding. It was foggy in his mind at the time of his 95 Theses but within a few years it became clear through his study of the Scriptures and a student of his, Melanchthon. See, at the time, the Bible was in Latin, even most monks couldn’t read Latin, obviously the common people couldn’t read it. So, they had no access to the Scriptures. You had to get high level training to learn Latin so you could access the Scriptures. So the people were at the mercy of what the Roman Catholic Church told them to do to go to heaven and how to get out of purgatory and all that. Luther went to graduate school where he studied Latin and gained access to the Scriptures. Through the study of Scripture he saw that there were contradictions between Scripture, what God says and Rome, what Rome says. Up till this point Luther’s doctrine of justification was Roman, that I am a sinner and therefore under the wrath of God. For God to pronounce me righteous I must become righteous through good works. So he saw God as this angry wrathful God. But in his study he found that the Scriptures also present God as loving. So, how does this all fit together? How can this wrathful God love me a sinner? Turn to Rom 1:16-17. I want you to

see the struggle that Martin Luther went through. Luther's discovery is often called the "Tower Experience" because he was in the tower of the Black Cloister in Wittenberg studying Rom 1:17 when the light of this Scripture broke upon him. Luther makes it clear in several places that this, not the Theses, was the pivotal event of his life.

Luther's conversion and breakthrough involved the correct understanding of God's righteousness. In verse 16 we see that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and in verse 17 Luther found that in the Gospel "the righteousness of God is revealed". Now, this was the point of his struggle with God. God is righteous but he was a sinner. So, he had been struggling for a long time to keep God's Law perfectly in order to become righteous. This, he believed, was what God demanded of him and all people. But he kept on failing. He could not keep God's law and achieve the righteousness that God demanded. Now, he was extremely zealous to understand Romans but when he reached this verse about God's righteousness it was like a blockade. For us this is good news but for Luther it was bad news. Why? Because the phrase "the righteousness of God" like most Biblical terms (e.g., grace, faith, justification, etc.) had been reinterpreted by scholastic theologians of the high and late Middle Ages 1100-1500 A.D. (esp. Gabriel Biel, Duns Scotus, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas) to support a theology of Law and works. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had taught that the righteousness of God was His active, personal righteousness or justice by which he punishes the unrighteous sinner. Luther tells us this is what he had been taught. This is what he believed. So that whenever he came across the phrase "the righteousness of God" in Scripture, it terrified him. He says it "struck my conscience like lightning," it "was like a thunderbolt in my heart", because I knew that I was an unrighteous sinner who fell far short of God's righteous demands. He was a realistic, honest little monk, honest about his sin. But it was even more than this for him. The righteousness of God filled Luther with anger and hatred toward God. "I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners." Is it not enough, Luther tells us, that God crushes us miserable sinners with His law, that He has to threaten us with punishment through the Gospel, too? So he meditated day and night on this passage until, he gave attention to the words at the end of v 17, "But he who is righteous through faith shall live" Then he realized that the verse was not talking about the active righteousness that we must work to attain for God to accept us, but the passive righteousness that He freely gives to those who believe

the Gospel. At this time he still perceived that as we believe the gospel God's righteousness is infused into us. Later, a student of his, Melanchthon, showed him that the "righteousness" is imputed not infused. We do not become righteous but God declares the sinner righteous so that at the same time we are sinners we are declared to be righteous and this occurs through faith in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. It was really Melanchthon that discovered that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us not infused into us through faith. He realized that it was not by Law keeping that we become righteous before God but through faith in Christ that the alien righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. Now, the tower experience, according to Luther was when he was converted, when he had discovered that God gives His righteousness as a gift in Christ, he felt that he "was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates...that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise." Before there had been only unrest and uncertainty. Now his conscience was at rest, now he was certain of his salvation. That is very important, the words that had caused unrest now put him to rest. And it is so important that we realize that there is no rest until we have faith in Christ, no true rest, no sure confidence, no certainty of heaven. But at the moment we understand this truth and truly believe it we can have assurance, absolute assurance. How did Luther then feel about the word "righteousness of God"? He says, "I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word...Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise."<sup>vi</sup> The words of Rom 1:17 are as precious today as they were 500 years ago for Martin Luther, "But he who is righteous through faith shall live." It is not through law keeping that we become righteous and acceptable before God but through faith, without any works. The same was true of Abraham, as Paul says later, "...to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness," (Rom 4:5). And it is true for all as Paul also says, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It <sup>26</sup>was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might

be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. <sup>27</sup>Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:21-28).

Now, that is what is at the heart of the Protestant Reformation and I promised you I would explain that word Protestant and I haven't done that yet. So, let me do that. The word Protestant comes from the Latin *protestatio* which means “declaration” and after Luther and others had tried to Reform the church and Luther was proclaimed a heretic and banned from the Holy Roman Empire in 1521, they protested after the decision at the Diet of Speyer in 1529. To do this they drew up a “declaration” of their beliefs and presented them before the Roman Catholic authorities. So, that's why it's called the Protestant Reformation. They tried to Reform but it ended in a separation by means of this declaration of beliefs. And thus true religious liberty was born. Thus the Puritans. Thus the United States of America. So, let me summarize the doctrines of the Reformation briefly.

1. The rejection of papal authority
2. Rejection of some fundamental Roman Catholic doctrines like prayers for the dead, purgatory, indulgences
3. The priesthood of all believers by which they meant free access for all believers to God through Jesus Christ alone
4. The primacy of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth
5. The belief in justification by faith alone.<sup>vii</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant\\_-\\_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_-_note-0)

Does history not give us a better thing to celebrate on Oct 31 than Halloween? Should we spend Oct 31<sup>st</sup> praying for dead saints? Should we spend Halloween dressing up to mimic or placate dead spirits that the ancient Gael's said would come back to life and wreak havoc, causing sickness or damaged crops?<sup>viii</sup> Is it not a much greater thing that God has given us religious freedom from tyranny? Is it not a what God has done providentially in history much greater, to take this unsuspecting monk, have him write the 95 Theses, to have him walk to the Wittenberg Church, to have him nail them to the door at 12 noon, challenging the most powerful men of his day? Martin Luther was not impressed with the powers that stood against him, the arrests, the trials, the kidnappings, the death-threats. At the Diet of Worms when Cardinal Cajetan told him to recant he said, unless I am

convinced by Scripture and by plain reason and not by Popes and councils who have so often contradicted themselves, my conscience is captive to the word of God. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe. I cannot and I will not recant. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. I read that to you because it vexes me to know that the Protestant denomination that uses Luther's name did recant in 1998 in that they signed a joint-statement with the Roman Catholics on the doctrine of justification. Are we going to let the devils of this world slyly, deceptively, linguistically manipulate the truth? Are we going to side with the majority? Are we just going to go along with the crowd? Or are we going to say "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me." It is not the number of men have never been impressed with numbers of men. Neither was Martin Luther, neither was Paul, neither was Moses, neither was Abraham. These men all went out by faith to accomplish God's will. They stood against the world. Do you know why they did that? Because as they looked out at the world of men they saw it did not compare to God. One man and God is always a majority. And God honors the humility and boldness of those who will stand up against those who abuse His word, who oppress the poor, who keep them from the power of His life-giving words and that for their own personal gain. Who are we to impede the power of the gospel?

*By grace God's Son, our only Savior,  
Came down to earth to bear our sin.  
Was it because of your own merit  
That Jesus died your soul to win?  
No, it was grace, and grace alone,  
That brought Him from His heav'nly throne.*

## END OF LESSON

The following notes include the 95 Theses and additional research into questions related to the Reformation and this study.

There were men who wanted to have the Scriptures in their native tongue. The problem was the collection of Greek manuscripts, but there was a man named Erasmus that met this need. Erasmus was the greatest living scholar in the early 1500's and he put together a Greek manuscript compiled from seven incomplete Greek manuscripts and his edition had the Greek in one column and the Latin in the other. His first edition was published in 1516.

This exposed many of the errors of the Latin Vulgate. His second edition appeared in 1519 and was used by Luther who translated from Erasmus' Greek Testament into the first German Bible in 1522. For the first time, Germans were able to read the words of Christ in their own tongue. Imagine that. His third edition of 1522 was used by William Tyndale to publish the first English Bible from the original Greek. It was 1525 so, for the first time, the English were able to read the words of Christ in their own tongue. The OT in English was published in 1535 in the Coverdale Bible. Evidence shows that 89% of the KJV of 1611 was Tyndale's work. But it was out of these translations of the Scriptures into English that the Puritans came. So much hinged on several historical events, perhaps as far back as the Waldenses in the 1200's, certainly to John Wycliffe in the late 1300's and John Hus in the 1400's. There was a burning desire among men to get the Scriptures in the tongue of the common man.

Martin Luther was born in Germany in 1483, so we're talking about 500 years ago in Europe

## **THE 95 THESES**

**by Martin Luther**

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
3. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortification of the flesh.
4. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self (that is, true inner repentance), namely till our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.
6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God; or, to be sure, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in these cases were disregarded, the guilt would certainly remain unforgiven.

7. God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time he humbles him in all things and makes him submissive to the vicar, the priest.

8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to the canons themselves, nothing should be imposed on the dying.

9. Therefore the Holy Spirit through the pope is kind to us insofar as the pope in his decrees always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.

10. Those priests act ignorantly and wickedly who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penalties for purgatory.

11. Those tares of changing the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory were evidently sown while the bishops slept (Mt 13:25).

12. In former times canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.

13. The dying are freed by death from all penalties, are already dead as far as the canon laws are concerned, and have a right to be released from them.

14. Imperfect piety or love on the part of the dying person necessarily brings with it great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater the fear.

15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, to say nothing of other things, to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near to the horror of despair.

16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation.

17. It seems as though for the souls in purgatory fear should necessarily decrease and love increase.

18. Furthermore, it does not seem proved, either by reason or by Scripture, that souls in purgatory are outside the state of merit, that is, unable to grow in love.

19. Nor does it seem proved that souls in purgatory, at least not all of them, are certain and assured of their own salvation, even if we ourselves may be entirely certain of it.

20. Therefore the pope, when he uses the words "plenary remission of all penalties," does not actually mean "all penalties," but only those imposed by himself.

21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

22. As a matter of fact, the pope remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to canon law, they should have paid in this life.

23. If remission of all penalties whatsoever could be granted to anyone at all, certainly it would be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to very few.

24. For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.

25. That power which the pope has in general over purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese and parish.

26. The pope does very well when he grants remission to souls in purgatory, not by the power of the keys, which he does not have, but by way of intercession for them.

27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.

29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed, since we have exceptions in St. Severinus and St. Paschal, as related in a legend.

30. No one is sure of the integrity of his own contrition, much less of having received plenary remission.

31. The man who actually buys indulgences is as rare as he who is really penitent; indeed, he is exceedingly rare.

32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

33. Men must especially be on guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to him.

34. For the graces of indulgences are concerned only with the penalties of sacramental satisfaction established by man.

35. They who teach that contrition is not necessary on the part of those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessional privileges preach unchristian doctrine.

36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.

37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.

38. Nevertheless, papal remission and blessing are by no means to be disregarded, for they are, as I have said (Thesis 6), the proclamation of the divine remission.

39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the bounty of indulgences and the need of true contrition.

40. A Christian who is truly contrite seeks and loves to pay penalties for his sins; the bounty of indulgences, however, relaxes penalties and causes men to hate them -- at least it furnishes occasion for hating them.

41. Papal indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.

42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend that the buying of indulgences should in any way be compared with works of mercy.

43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.

44. Because love grows by works of love, man thereby becomes better. Man does not, however, become better by means of indulgences but is merely freed from penalties.

45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.

46. Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences.

47. Christians are to be taught that they buying of indulgences is a matter of free choice, not commanded.

48 Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting indulgences, needs and thus desires their devout prayer more than their money.

49. Christians are to be taught that papal indulgences are useful only if they do not put their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.

50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.

51. Christians are to be taught that the pope would and should wish to give of his own money, even though he had to sell the basilica of St. Peter, to many of those from whom certain hawkers of indulgences cajole money.

52. It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters, even though the indulgence commissary, or even the pope, were to offer his soul as security.

53. They are the enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.

54. Injury is done to the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.

55. It is certainly the pope's sentiment that if indulgences, which are a very insignificant thing, are celebrated with one bell, one procession, and one ceremony, then the gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.

56. The true treasures of the church, out of which the pope distributes indulgences, are not sufficiently discussed or known among the people of Christ.

57. That indulgences are not temporal treasures is certainly clear, for many indulgence sellers do not distribute them freely but only gather them.

58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, for, even without the pope, the latter always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outer man.

59. St. Lawrence said that the poor of the church were the treasures of the church, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.

60. Without want of consideration we say that the keys of the church, given by the merits of Christ, are that treasure.

61. For it is clear that the pope's power is of itself sufficient for the remission of penalties and cases reserved by himself.

62. The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.

63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last (Mt. 20:16).

64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.

65. Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth.

66. The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men.

67. The indulgences which the demagogues acclaim as the greatest graces are actually understood to be such only insofar as they promote gain.

68. They are nevertheless in truth the most insignificant graces when compared with the grace of God and the piety of the cross.

69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of papal indulgences with all reverence.

70. But they are much more bound to strain their eyes and ears lest these men preach their own dreams instead of what the pope has commissioned.

71. Let him who speaks against the truth concerning papal indulgences be anathema and accursed.

72. But let him who guards against the lust and license of the indulgence preachers be blessed.

73. Just as the pope justly thunders against those who by any means whatever contrive harm to the sale of indulgences.

74. Much more does he intend to thunder against those who use indulgences as a pretext to contrive harm to holy love and truth.

75. To consider papal indulgences so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God is madness.

76. We say on the contrary that papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins as far as guilt is concerned.

77. To say that even St. Peter if he were now pope, could not grant greater graces is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.

78. We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written, 1 Co 12[:28].

79. To say that the cross emblazoned with the papal coat of arms, and set up by the indulgence preachers is equal in worth to the cross of Christ is blasphemy.

80. The bishops, curates, and theologians who permit such talk to be spread among the people will have to answer for this.

81. This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander or from the shrewd questions of the laity.

82. Such as: "Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church? The former reason would be most just; the latter is most trivial.

83. Again, "Why are funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continued and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded for them, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?"

84. Again, "What is this new piety of God and the pope that for a consideration of money they permit a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God and do not rather, because of the need of that pious and beloved soul, free it for pure love's sake?"

85. Again, "Why are the penitential canons, long since abrogated and dead in actual fact and through disuse, now satisfied by the granting of indulgences as though they were still alive and in force?"

86. Again, "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"

87. Again, "What does the pope remit or grant to those who by perfect contrition already have a right to full remission and blessings?"

88. Again, "What greater blessing could come to the church than if the pope were to bestow these remissions and blessings on every believer a hundred times a day, as he now does but once?"

89. "Since the pope seeks the salvation of souls rather than money by his indulgences, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons previously granted when they have equal efficacy?"

90. To repress these very sharp arguments of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies and to make Christians unhappy.

91. If, therefore, indulgences were preached according to the spirit and intention of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved. Indeed, they would not exist.

92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace! (Jer 6:14)

93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!

94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell.

95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace (Acts 14:22).

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<sup>i</sup> George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Pubs., 2001).

<sup>ii</sup> George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Pubs., 2001).

<sup>iii</sup> Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

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- iv Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
  - v Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
  - vi <http://www.orlutheran.com/html/tower.html>
  - vii [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestation\\_at\\_Speyer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestation_at_Speyer)
  - viii [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween#\\_note-Campbell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween#_note-Campbell)

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