

100817 Romans 1:16
Reformation 500 Series

Scripture Alone: Gospel

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A young man tortured by guilt. A child of God, raised in a religious home, a believer in Christ; but a lost soul consumed by a deep, dark sense of unworthiness before the Lord. A sinner acutely aware of his own faults, haunted by his own failings. Sound like anyone you know?

This could be the story of about a billion people in our world today. But this is the story of Martin Luther. The beginning, I should say of his story.

Five centuries ago, Luther was the young man tormented with his own guilt. He had made his vow to renounce worldly goods and pursuits, and had become a monk. He was trying to get right with God. But the more religious he became, the more he fasted and prayed, the harder he tried to please God, the clearer the truth became for him. "I'm coming up short. I'm always coming up short in God's eyes," young Luther recognized, "and I always will." Sound like anyone you know?

His picture of God, in those days? The angry judge. The righteous, perfectly-just judge, who correctly found Martin Luther guilty – guilty of sin, iniquity, immorality, and trespass. The Law of God condemned young Luther, and he saw no way out. He knew no hope. Luther was one messed-up monk. Sound like anyone you know?

One thing saved Luther. One glorious, shining thing turned this troubled young man's story around. It was the Word – the Bible, the Scriptures. The young monk Luther was assigned to study the Bible. He went to graduate school to

study the Bible. He was at a low point, spiritually; but he was studying the Bible every day, diving deep into the Word of God.

And the Word of God spoke to that messed-up monk's soul. Young Luther began to see a new and different picture of God, as the Bible painted the picture. Not the angry judge, but the loving Father. Not the mean-hearted deity who delights in sentencing sinners to well-deserved damnation, but the compassionate parent who is eager to embrace and restore his wayward children. Not a God who ignores the demands of the Law, but the covenant God of the Bible who sends the punishment for our sins onto his Son.

Reading his Bible, listening to the Word of God, guilty Luther came to grips with the Gospel. He read and wrestled with the Gospel. After years of wallowing in his self-inflicted bad news, our messed-up monk finally embraced God's Good News of forgiveness and salvation for sinners, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness of sins – even mine and yours! Salvation for sinners – even sinners like you and me. That's the Gospel!

When that young monk finally grasped what God's Word was saying to him -- that righteousness was a gift from God, not something to be earned – it impacted Luther's life tremendously. The Word of God changed Luther's understanding of God, and his view of himself. The Gospel changed Luther's heart.

Sound like anyone you know?

The Law convicts me. But the Gospel sets me free. The Law convicts you. But the Gospel sets you free. The Gospel brings you forgiveness. The Gospel gives you new life. The Gospel gives you new hope today. The Gospel of Jesus

Christ gives the worst sinner here a new relationship with God, a new start.

Watch and listen to Luther preaching this Gospel, sharing this Good News with sinners. This is just another clip from a movie about his life. But these were Luther's words from one of his actual sermons. No longer the struggling, messed-up monk we saw last week. Today we see a man of God whose whole life has been changed forever by the Word alone, by the Gospel. Let's run the clip.

Video

The Word of God alone has the power to forgive, and to save. It was the Word of God alone that dramatically changed the story of Luther's life. And in the weeks ahead we'll see how the Word of God alone was the power that sparked the Reformation, and revitalized the Church.

Does any of that sound like anyone you know? Or anything you've experienced? Has the Word of God made such an impact on your life yet? Has the Gospel really reached your heart?

Or are you wallowing still in your own self-inflicted bad news? Is the weight of your sins and the power of God's Law crushing your spirit? Are you coming up short – always coming up short – in God's sight, like Luther was? Like we all do?

Then hear the Gospel today! This is God's Word to you right now!

Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

And Romans 8:1, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Micah 7:18-19, “God does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

John 5:24, the promise of Christ himself, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

Sound like anyone you know? Thank God, the Gospel is for you! Amen.