

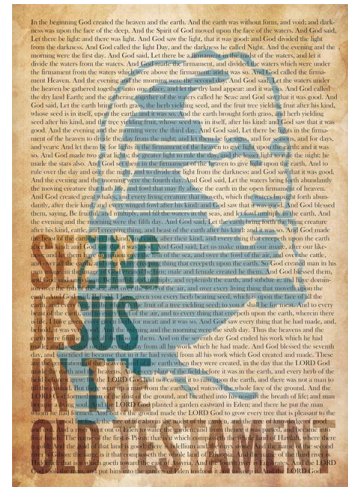


CONCORDIA
BIBLE INSTITUTE
Christ in Every Word

CBI e-Bulletin November 2017

Welcome to this month's edition of the Concordia Bible Institute (CBI) e-Bulletin.

CBI exists to provide Christ-centered Bible instruction through distinguished experts who teach "Christ in Every Word" of the Old and New Testaments. Under the direction of Dr. Brian German and in cooperation with the Department of Theology at Concordia University Wisconsin, CBI offers podcasts, face-to-face seminars, and other special events to strengthen faith and spread belief in the one true God.



"For the whole Christ is in every word and wholly in each individual word. When He is denied, therefore, in one word, He is totally denied, for He is in every word."
-Martin Luther (Luther's Works, 25:238).

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Celebrating the Reformation

Question: *We've been celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at my church, but I've never actually read the 95 theses. How important are they in the big scheme of things, and how would you boil them down for the average layperson?*

This is indeed an exciting time in the history of the church, isn't it? While the Reformation included a series of people, events, and documents all dedicated to reform the teachings and practices of the medieval church, Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses was in many ways the first major push to get this reform in motion. Even though Luther drafted these theses for academic debate (the original title for them was "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences"), they soon spread like wild fire and were discussed throughout the lands in ways he never would've imagined. In fact, here we are 500 years later still talking about them!

While Luther didn't categorize his theses in any way, I think there are some clear themes that emerge as he worked his way from #1 to #95 that can help us understand his thinking at the time. Here are five issues that appear to be most central for him:

1) Repentance: Theses 1-4

Luther clearly had issues with how repentance was being taught and practiced in his day. It had gotten to the point, in fact, that repentance was starting to look like a product for sale rather than something integral to the Christian life. The very first thesis addresses this head on: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." In the years to come, Luther would often stress how Christians should drown the old Adam daily (e.g., in his Small and Large Catechisms).

2) Indulgences

As the original title for the 95 theses suggests, it should come as no surprise that theses about indulgences are the most represented in Luther's treatise. His concerns with indulgences fall roughly into three subcategories:

Their Limitations: Theses 27-37

Luther was very skeptical about how much an indulgence could actually accomplish for an individual. Two extremely important theses in this group are numbers 36 and 37, which read as follows: "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."

Their Relation to Good Works: Theses 41-49

In this group of theses, Luther argued that indulgences should never minimize or serve as a substitute for the genuine good works that a Christian is called to do. In the years to come, Luther would often stress that good works flow from faith and are carried out not for the self but for the neighbor out of love.

Their Relation to the Gospel: Theses 52-68

Luther also argued that indulgences always take a back seat to the true treasure of the church: the gospel of Jesus Christ. As he put it in thesis #62, "The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God."

3) Pope/Preachers

Another major concern of Luther in the 95 theses is with the pope and preachers of his day. This category can also be subdivided as follows:

Their Limitations: Theses 5-13; 20-22; 25-26

In these theses Luther maintains that the authority being claimed for the pope and many preachers was getting way out of hand.

Their Errors: Theses 50-51; 69-75; 77-81; 82-92

Luther also argued that the pope and indulgence preachers of his day were clearly corrupt. An interesting group of theses here is numbers 82-91, where Luther includes various questions of the laity that were weighing on their hearts, such as in thesis #82: "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?"

4) The Conscience: Theses 14-16; 23-24; 39-40

Always the pastor, Luther was also very concerned for recipes that would make an individual fall into despair, something he himself knew all too well throughout his personal struggles and longing for a merciful God.

5) The Cross: Theses 93-95

Finally, Luther also included a few theses on the role of the cross in the Christian life, and it should be noted that these are the last three of his list. Already at this point in his life, one can see Luther emphasizing in kernel form how Christians are to take up their cross as they follow Christ, a teaching that would later blossom as a clear centerpiece in Lutheran theology: the theology of the cross.

In sum, Luther's 95 theses were essentially a protest against bad care of souls. For that reason alone, it is most certainly forgetting to give thanks to our Lord for what he accomplished through Martin Luther and the many other individuals who contributed to what we now call the Reformation.




Happy Anniversary!

Dr. Brian German

For more on Luther and the 95 theses, [click here](#) to listen to Dr. German's podcast.

Read the Bible in a Year

Looking to add to your devotions this year? Or simply want to accomplish the goal of reading the Bible in a year? Follow along with the calendar below! A new calendar will be sent in each newsletter.

 Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday 
			1 Exodus 15:1-18 Hosea 8-10	2 Psalm 122 Hosea 11-14	3 Psalm 123 Joel	4 Psalm 124 Amos 1-5
5 Psalm 125 Amos 6-9	6 Psalm 126 Obadiah, Jonah	7 Psalm 127 Micah 1-3	8 Psalm 128 Micah 4-7	9 Psalm 129 Nahum	10 Psalm 130 Habakkuk	11 Psalm 131 Zephaniah
12 Psalm 132 Haggai	13 Psalm 133 Zechariah 1-5	14 Psalm 134 Zechariah 6-10	15 Psalm 135 Zechariah 11-14	16 Psalm 136 Malachi	17 Psalm 137 Matthew 1-2	18 Psalm 138 Matthew 3-4
19 Psalm 139 Matthew 5-6	20 Psalm 140 Matthew 7-8	21 Psalm 141 Matthew 9-10	22 Psalm 142 Matthew 11-12	23 Psalm 143 Matthew 13-14 <i>Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	24 Psalm 144 Matthew 15-16	25 Psalm 145 Matthew 17-18
26 Psalm 146 Matthew 19-20	27 Psalm 147 Matthew 21-22	28 Psalm 148 Matthew 23-24	29 Psalm 149-140 Matthew 25-26	30 Exodus 15:1-18 Matthew 27-28		

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