

From the Pastor's Desk,

The year 2017 marks 500 years since a stubborn monk and towering thinker, Martin Luther, published his 95 theses or complaints against the Catholic Church and launched the Protestant Reformation, a momentous religious revolution whose consequences we still live with today. The Reformation divided the Western church and transformed millions of people's understanding of their relationship with God.

The world was changing. New scientific discoveries had opened pathways for understanding more about our complex universe. The ocean, once feared for its danger and depth, was tamed for travel and trade. Peasants and workers, laboring under harsh and relentless conditions, sought revolution. The bubonic plague had claimed the lives of about 75 million people from 1347 to 1351. Political alliances, long forged between pope and prince, fractured as power centers shifted. Gutenberg's press (1455), the first to use movable type, transported ideas from one person to the next with swiftness and ease. As the medieval era collapsed into the modern, changes seemed to be happening everywhere.

The Reformation was, first and foremost, all about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was then, and it still is now. We must remember that God often works through us in spite of ourselves. Thanks to the perversity of men, God's cause does not make clear and constant progress, although it progresses slowly and surely. Sometimes it seems to lose ground; but, after all, the apparent loss is transmuted by divine alchemy into means of future gain." That should be an encouragement for us, as we maneuver the difficulties of our own age.

Luther himself, who tended to see human efforts not only as vain but also often as a joke, recognized that God alone could advance His cause. For this reason, he once quipped that he had done nothing at all to make the Reformation succeed. "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing," Luther said, as reported by Timothy George in "Theology of the Reformers." "And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip Melancthon and my Nicolaus von Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all."

Perhaps, that is ultimately why we should celebrate Luther and the rest of the Reformers, for they trusted Scripture to make an impact in their age. Despite numerous obstacles, they endeavored to publish it widely both in print and proclamation. And, without nails or glue, God's Word has continued to stick with us for centuries, resounding across the globe. Such was the core truth of the 16th-century Reformation, and such should be the crux of all our endeavors: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" ([Isaiah 40:8](#)). The task of reformation never ends, for every person, in every generation, needs to hear the good news of their Savior from sin and eternal death.

Yours in Christ, 

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