

Year at a Glance	
Nov 9-Dec 14	Early Church Age
Jan 4-Feb 8	Post-Nicene Age
Feb 15-Mar 22	Medieval Age
Mar 29-May 10	Reformation Age
May 17-May 31	Great Awakening to Today

Reformation Age	
Mar 29	“Martin Luther and Protestantism” (chapter 24)
Apr 5	Easter (no class)
Apr 12	“John Calvin” (chapter 26)
Apr 19	“The Anabaptists” (chapter 25)
Apr 26	“The Church of England” (chapter 27)
May 3	“The Catholic Reformation/America and Asia” (chapters 28-29)
May 10	“Puritanism/Denominations” (chapter 30-31)

Last week we studied two key pre-Reformers whom God used to prepare the way for the Reformation. We began with **John Wycliffe**, often called the “morning star of the Reformation,” a brilliant **scholar** from Oxford who **challenged** the foundations of medieval **church authority**. Wycliffe taught that all authority comes from God and can be forfeited when misused, and that Christ—not the pope—is the true head of the church. He emphasized that **Scripture** is the preeminent authority for every believer, insisted that the **Bible** should be available in the **common language**, and **elevated preaching as the most important work of the church**. He also rejected **transubstantiation** and strongly **opposed indulgences**, arguing that forgiveness cannot be bought but is given by God’s grace alone.

We then considered the spread of Wycliffe’s influence through the **Lollards** and his commitment to sending out preachers to teach God’s Word to the people. Though his teachings were condemned—even after his death—his ideas continued to spread. This led us to **Jan Hus** of Bohemia, who was deeply influenced by Wycliffe and became a powerful preacher at Bethlehem Chapel. Hus proclaimed **Christ as the only head of the church**, emphasized **salvation by grace** through Christ alone, and **rejected the authority of indulgences**. **Preaching in the language of the people**, he called for true repentance and faith, even as he remained within some aspects of medieval theology.

Finally, we looked at Hus’ courageous stand and martyrdom at the **Council of Constance in 1415**. Though **promised safe conduct**, he was condemned and burned at the stake, dying with faith and resolve. His death did not silence his influence, as the Hussite movement continued and helped shape future reform efforts. Hus stands as a faithful preacher, a courageous **martyr**, and a **forerunner of the Reformation**, reminding us that God often uses suffering servants to prepare the way for greater works.

The Reformation Age

“Luther and the Protestants”

“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”—Romans 1:17

“Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.”—Prov. 14:4

Class Prayer: From Luther’s prayer the morning before the Diet of Worms:

“My God, stand by me, against all the world’s wisdom, and reason....Not mine but yours is the cause....**I would prefer to have peaceful days and to be out of this turmoil.** But yours, O Lord, is this cause; it is righteous and eternal. Stand by me, you true Eternal God! In no man do I trust....Stand by me, O God, in the name of your dear Son Jesus Christ, who shall be my Defense and Shelter, yes, my Mighty Fortress, through the might and strength of your Holy Spirit. Amen.”

I. Background of the Protestant Reformation

- A. Remember, the soil of the Reformation to come was broken up by **Wyclif** and **Hus** a hundred years earlier.
- B. Erasmus (Greek N.T.) and the Humanists
 1. Resurgence of study of the **original languages**
 2. Wholesale critique of **scholasticism** (remember Ockham)
 3. Expectations of a new age
 4. “**The humanists saw Christ as the Master and the model of morality, while the Reformers saw him as the Savior who pardons, the one through whom eternal life is attained**” (Courvoisier cited in *Reformation Overview*, p. 22).
- C. **The Printing Press (c. 1450)**
 1. One major factor in why Martin Luther had far greater impact than Jan Hus and John Wycliffe before him.
 2. In Luther’s lifetime, over 4,000 editions of his works were published.
 3. It is often estimated that **as much as one-third of all printed material in Germany** during the early Reformation years came from Luther’s pen.
- D. The Political Scene
 1. Rising **nationalism** was weakening the Holy Roman Empire (Charles V).

2. Growing independence among the German princes (**Frederick the Wise** of Saxony allowed Luther to minister in spite of the emperor's edicts against him).
3. Very different from the time of Hus and Sigismund.

E. The Questions of Protestantism

1. How is a person saved? (Luther: not by works but by faith alone)
2. Where does religious authority lie? (Luther: not in the visible institution called the Roman church but in the Word of God found in the Bible)
3. What is the church? (Luther: the whole community of Christian believers, since all are priests before God)
4. What is the essence of Christian living? (Luther: serving God in any useful calling whether ordained or lay)

II. Luther's Life

- A. How many have heard of Luther's **97 Theses** (Gonzalez, p. 20)?¹
- B. **More books have been written about Martin Luther** than just about anyone else in history other than Jesus Christ.
- C. Born November 10, 1483, son of Saxon **miner**.
- D. Studied **law** until 1505
- E. During a thunderstorm, a lightning bolt struck very close to him. In fear, he cried out, "**St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk**" ("Heilige Anna, hilf mir! Ich will Mönch werden!"). He later entered an Augustinian monastery.
- F. "If ever a **monk** got to heaven by his monkery it was I."
- G. **His first mass** was a deeply unsettling experience for Martin Luther. As he stood at the altar, he was overwhelmed by the thought that he, a sinful man, was addressing a holy and majestic God. Instead of confidence, he felt intense fear and unworthiness, even **trembling during the service**. This moment exposed the deep spiritual struggle within him and his growing awareness that outward religious acts could not quiet his conscience or reconcile him to God.

¹ If the 95 Theses attack the practice of indulgences, the 97 Theses attack the *thinking behind the system*—especially the reliance on human reason and works instead of Scripture and grace.

- H. **His extreme asceticism** - Luther subjected himself to intense fasting, sleeplessness, and harsh self-denial, seeking to overcome sin and earn peace with God, yet found no relief for his conscience.
- I. **His hatred for God (the problem of the presence of God)** - Struggling under the weight of God's righteousness, Luther came to resent the very idea of a holy God who demands perfection yet seems only to condemn the sinner.
- J. **"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"** - Luther wrestled deeply with Christ's cry from the cross, seeing in it the profound reality of abandonment and judgment that both terrified him and later clarified the gospel.
- K. **His pilgrimage to Rome** - During his journey to Rome, Luther was disillusioned by the moral corruption and spiritual emptiness he witnessed, shaking his confidence in the institutional church.
- L. **Chair of biblical studies at Wittenberg** - As a professor at the University of Wittenberg, Luther's lecturing on Scripture—especially Psalms, Romans, and Galatians—became the context in which his understanding of justification by faith was forged.
- M. Rom. 1:17 (sola fide; sola gratia; sola Christa)
- Luther said, "Thereupon I felt that I had been born again and entered paradise through wide-open doors." [more below]
- N. John Tetzel's sale of indulgences (1517) for the construction of St. Peter's basilica.
1. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."
 2. Posted 95 Theses on the Castle church door at Wittenberg October 31, 1517.
- O. Early Publications
1. *Address to the Nobility of the German Nation*. Luther called upon the state to correct the abuses of the church, **strip the abbots of their wealth and power and establish a German Church** (recall Wycliffe).
 2. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Argued from justification by faith that the **sacramental system held Christians captive** (priesthood of all believers).
 3. *The Freedom of a Christian Mind*. Works flow from faith. Sanctity of all callings.

- P. Debate with Eck in 1519 – “A council may sometimes err. Neither the church nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture.” (*sola Scriptura*)

Later in life when preaching about the power of his ministry, Luther said, “All I have done is to put forth, preach and write the Word of God, and apart from this I have done nothing. While I have been sleeping, or drinking Wittenberg beer...it is the Word that has done great things. I have done nothing; the Word has done and achieved everything.”

- Q. Papal bull published in June 1520 by Pope Leo X. Luther had 60 days to recant. Luther burned the bull with the Canon Law and other scholastic books. He was excommunicated in January 1521.

R. Diet at Worms

1. Luther’s comment on his going to the Diet at Worms—“I will go there, though I should find there as many devils as there are tiles on the house tops.”
2. Luther at Worms—“Unless I am convinced by the evidence of Scripture or by plain reason—for I do not accept the authority of the pope or the councils alone, since it is established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves—I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. God, help me. Amen.”
3. Kenneth Clark: “Whatever else he may have been, Luther was a hero; and after all the doubts and hesitations of the humanists, and the hovering flight of Erasmus, it is with a real sense of emotional relief that we hear Luther say: ‘Here I Stand’” (*Civilization*, 157).

S. Wartburg Castle

1. **Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony**, protected Luther after the Diet of Worms by arranging a staged “**kidnapping**” and hiding him at Wartburg Castle (1521–1522), ensuring his safety from imperial arrest while allowing his reforming work to continue indirectly.
2. While in hiding, Luther lived under the alias “**Junker (knight) George**,” dressing as a knight with beard and sword, experiencing isolation, spiritual struggle, and intense temptation, yet continuing to write letters, treatises, and pastoral counsel.
3. During his stay at Wartburg, Luther **translated the New Testament from Greek into German (completed in about 11 weeks)**, producing a clear, accessible Bible

that shaped the German language and allowed ordinary people to read Scripture for themselves.

4. The **“inkwell incident”** at Wartburg Castle is a famous story about Martin Luther allegedly throwing an inkwell at the devil while in hiding there. The tale reflects Luther’s intense spiritual struggles and sense of spiritual warfare during that time. However, historians generally regard the story as a **later legend**, not a confirmed historical event.

5. **Radicals** at home

While Luther was hidden at Wartburg, radical reformers in Wittenberg—led by **Andreas Karlstadt and influenced by the “Zwickau Prophets”**—**pushed changes beyond his teaching, appealing to visions and implementing reforms without pastoral care.** Their actions brought confusion and unrest, showing the danger of separating the Spirit from the Word. Luther returned in 1522 and, through the **Invocavit Sermons**,² called for reform grounded in Scripture, patience, and love. He insisted that true change comes through the Word, not force.

T. Return to Wittenburg 1522

1. Abolished office of bishop
2. Many pastors took wives including Luther (Katherine von Bora) (fish barrel escape)
 - a. Love and realism
 - b. He married at first to bear children (and to thumb his nose at the pope).
 - c. **“My lord Katie,” “My rib” (and Galatians was “my Katie”). He said that in most things he let Katie tell him what to do, and in other things the Holy Spirit told him what to do.**
 - d. **“Marriage does not consist only with sleeping with a woman—everybody can do that!—but keeping house and bringing up children” (LW 54:441). The husband and father washing smelly diapers may be ridiculed by fools, but “God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling—not because the father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith” (LW 45:40).**
 - e. Luther’s children

² *“Invocavit* means ‘he calls upon Me,’ and it reminds us that true reform begins by calling on God and submitting to His Word.”

- 1) He taught his children and learned from them.
 - 2) He loved his children and they loved him—Magdalena died at 13; Luther was devastated (“It’s strange to know that she is surely at peace...and yet to grieve so much” [LW 54:432]).
 3. Revised the liturgy and translated it into German
 4. Laity could receive both bread and wine
 5. Emphasis of worship changed from the mass to preaching and teaching
- U. Peasants revolt (1525) (*Against the Murdering and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*)
- V. Augsburg Confession (Philip Melancthon) (1530)
- W. Sins of His Old Age
1. Endorsed bigamous marriage of Prince Philip of Hesse
 2. Could not unite with other Reformers like Zwingli
 3. Very harsh words for the Jews (*On the Jews and their Lies*)
 4. His coarseness in language and conduct (really throughout his life) (like how he would make the devil flee; his story of the burial of a priest and a dog).
- X. Peace of Augsburg (1555) – Allowed each prince to decide the religion of his subjects.
- Y. Luther died February 18, 1546 (62 years old) (“The charioteer of Israel has fallen”)

III. Luther’s Theology

A. The Foundation—“The righteous will live by faith”

Luther—“By the one solid rock we call the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fidei*), we mean that we are redeemed from sin, death and the devil, and are made partakers of life eternal, **not by self-help but by outside help**, namely by the work of the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ alone” (*sola Christus*).

Luther’s search for the meaning of Romans 1:17

1. Does God’s righteousness = God’s requirement?

a. **First crisis**—the thunderstorm

“I was a good monk and kept my order so strictly that I could say that if ever a monk could get to heaven through monastic discipline, I was that monk...And yet my conscience would not give me certainty, but I always doubted and said, ‘You didn’t do that right. You weren’t contrite enough. You left that out of your confession.’ The more I tried to remedy an uncertain, weak and troubled conscience with human traditions, the more I daily found it more uncertain, weaker and more troubled.”

b. **Second crisis**—the first mass “I don’t love God! I hate God!”

2. God’s righteousness = God’s gift

a. Luther’s lectures on Scripture at the University of Wittenberg 1513-17 (Psalms, Romans, Galatians, Hebrews)

b. In his study

c. His writings are “like the sky in springtime, filled with clouds but through which the sun shines from time to time” (Aland, 26)

d. **Third crisis**—“the tower experience”

“At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed,’ as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the **passive righteousness** with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”

B. The Center—“The **Theology of the Cross**” (*Disputation Against Scholastic Theology...Heidelberg Disputation*)

1. The theology of glory (medieval emphasis)

2. The theology of the cross

- a. “We are in truth and totally sinners, with regard to ourselves and our first birth. Contrariwise, insofar as Christ has been given for us, we are holy and just totally. Hence from different aspects we are said to be just and sinners at one and the same time.” (SIMUL)
 - b. “We are always sinning, always repenting, always forgiven.”
- C. The Method—“*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*” (*Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther’s German Writings*)
- 1. Prayer (wanted to pray like his dog Topel begged for meat).
 - 2. Study
 - 3. Testing or *anfechtung*
 - a. *Anfechtung* is the experience of being brought to the end of yourself so that you cling to Christ alone.
 - b. For Luther, *Anfechtung* involved:
 - i. **The Law pressing in** - exposing sin and unworthiness
 - ii. **Satan accusing** - “You are condemned”
 - iii. **God seeming hidden** - no comfort, no assurance
 - iv. **The conscience troubled** - deep unrest before God
 - c. “It is living, dying, and even being condemned which makes a theologian—not reading, speculating, and understanding.”
 - d. “David must have been plagued by a very fearful devil. He could not have had such profound insights if he had not experienced great assaults.”
- D. Luther’s Small Catechism (“Christianity for Common Folk”)
- E. The Augsburg Confession

IV. Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560)

- A. Scholarly teacher
- B. Conciliatory reformer

Luther—“I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike...I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns, and clear the wild forests, and master

Philip comes along softly and gently, sowing and watering with joy, according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him.”

C. Timid and fearful personality

1. Luther—“**Sin boldly!**”
2. “You are worrying yourself sick because you cannot know how or where it will all end. But were you able to understand it all, then I would have nothing to do with this cause!”

D. Skillful theologian

1. Luther—“Philip’s answers are miracles. If Christ deign, he will make many Luthers and a most powerful enemy of scholastic theology, for he knows both their folly and Christ’s rock” (1519).
2. *Loci Communes* (1521) - the first systematic presentation of Protestant theology, organizing key doctrines like sin, grace, and justification into a clear, Scripture-centered framework grounded in Luther’s reforms.
3. Augsburg Confession (1530)

E. Melanchthon’s theological shifts

1. Move toward Erasmus on salvation (synergism)—“The Holy Spirit and the Word are first active in conversion, but the will of man is not wholly inactive; God draws, but draws him who is willing, for man is not a statue” (1555).
2. Move toward Calvin on the Lord’s Supper—“Christ is not present for the sake of the bread, but for the sake of man” (1541)
3. Alexander Smellie: “There are elusive elements in Philip Melanchthon. Occasionally he perplexed his contemporaries, and sometimes he disappointed his friends. It is scarcely surprising that, now and then, he is an enigma to us. We are drawn to him irresistibly; we feel his singular graciousness and attraction; but we are not certain that in every instance, we can appreciate his motives or interpret his mind” (*The Reformation in its Literature*, 96).

V. Some Results of the Reformation

- A. Worship in the common language of the people
- B. Justification by faith alone led to a de-emphasis of external rituals and focused on the inner spiritual life.
- C. Authority of Scripture replaced the authority of the pope and medieval traditions
- D. Preaching became much more important.
- E. Monasticism as the ideal of holiness was replaced by the priesthood of all believers. Each person's calling was considered an area of divine service.
- F. Significance of the sacraments re-evaluated and reduced to two
- G. Liturgy redesigned in accordance with Scripture
- H. The family began to be seen as a household of faith. Martin and Katherine became an example of the Protestant home.

“THE ARGUMENT OF ST. PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS” (Martin Luther)³

1. The Argument⁴

First of all, we must speak of the argument, that is, of the issue with which Paul deals in this epistle. **The argument is this:** Paul wants to establish the doctrine of **faith, grace, the forgiveness of sins** or **Christian righteousness**, so that we may have a perfect knowledge and know the difference between **Christian righteousness** and **all other kinds** of righteousness.

2. Kinds of ACTIVE Righteousness

For righteousness is of many kinds. There is a **political [civil]** righteousness, which the emperor, the princes of the world, philosophers, and lawyers consider.

There is also a **ceremonial [cultural]** righteousness, which human traditions teach, as, for example, the traditions of the pope and other traditions. Parents and teachers may teach this righteousness without danger, because they do not attribute to it any power to make satisfaction for sin, to placate God, and to earn grace; but they teach that these ceremonies are necessary only for moral discipline and for certain observances.

There is, in addition to these, yet another righteousness, **the righteousness of the Law [legal]** or of the Decalog, which Moses teaches. We, too, teach this, but after the doctrine of faith.

3. Distinguishing Active Righteousness from Christian (PASSIVE) Righteousness

Over and above all these there is **the righteousness of faith** or **Christian righteousness**, which is to be **distinguished** most carefully from all the others.

For they are **all contrary** to this righteousness, both

because they **proceed** from the laws of emperors, the traditions of the pope, and the commandments of God,

and because they consist in our **works** and **can be achieved by us** with “purely natural endowments,” as the scholastics teach, or from a gift of God. For these kinds of the righteousness of works, too, are gifts of God, as are all the things we have.

But this most excellent righteousness, **the righteousness of faith, which God imputes to us through Christ without works, is neither political nor ceremonial nor legal nor work-righteousness but is quite the opposite; it is a merely passive righteousness, while all the others, listed above, are active. For here we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely, God.** Therefore it is appropriate to call the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness “passive.”

³ Translation by Theodore Graebner

⁴ All of the division titles have been supplied by me to aid reading and study.

4. **Who Understands Passive Righteousness?**

This is a righteousness hidden in a mystery, which **the world does not understand**. In fact, **Christians themselves do not adequately understand it or grasp it in the midst of their temptations. Therefore it must always be taught and continually exercised**. And anyone who does not grasp or take hold of it in afflictions and terrors of conscience cannot stand. **For there is no comfort of conscience so solid and certain as is this passive righteousness**.

5. **Humans Have Acquired the Unhappy Habit of Looking to Their Own Righteousness and Are Unable to Reason or Will Their Way to Look toward Passive Righteousness.**

But such is **human weakness** and **misery** that in the terrors of conscience and in the danger of death we look at nothing except our own works, our worthiness, and the Law. When the Law shows us our sin, our past life immediately comes to our mind. Then the sinner, in his great anguish of mind, groans and says to himself: "Oh, how damnably I have lived! If only I could live longer! Then I would amend my life." Thus **human reason cannot** refrain from looking at active righteousness, that is, its own righteousness; nor can it shift its gaze to passive, that is, Christian righteousness, but it simply rests in the active righteousness. **So deeply is this evil rooted in us, and so completely have we acquired this unhappy habit!** Taking advantage of the weakness of our nature, **Satan** increases and aggravates these thoughts in us. Then it is **impossible** for the conscience to avoid being more seriously troubled, confounded, and frightened. For it is **impossible** for the human mind to conceive any comfort of itself, or to look only at grace amid its consciousness and terror of sin, or consistently to reject all discussion of works. To do this is **beyond human power and thought**. Indeed, it is **even beyond the Law of God**. **For although the Law is the best of all things in the world, it still cannot bring peace to a terrified conscience but makes it even sadder and drives it to despair. For by the Law sin becomes exceedingly sinful (Rom. 7:13).**

6. **The Only Remedy for the Afflicted Conscience**

Therefore the afflicted conscience has **no remedy against despair and eternal death except to take hold of the promise of grace offered in Christ, that is, this righteousness of faith, this passive or Christian righteousness, which says with confidence:**

"I do not seek active righteousness. I ought to have and perform it; but I declare that even if I did have it and perform it, I cannot trust in it or stand up before the judgment of God on the basis of it. Thus I put myself beyond all active righteousness, all righteousness of my own or of the divine Law, and I embrace only that **passive righteousness which is the righteousness of grace, mercy, and the forgiveness of sins.**"

In other words, this is the righteousness of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, which we do not perform but receive, which we do not have but accept, when God the Father grants it to us through Jesus Christ.⁵

⁵ Chad Bird's creed/moto in miniature: "God gives. We receive."

7. An Analogy of Earth and Rain

As the **earth** itself does not produce **rain** and is unable to acquire it by its own strength, worship, and power but **receives** it only by a heavenly **gift** from above, so this heavenly righteousness is **given** to us by God without our work or merit.⁶ As much as the dry earth of itself is able to accomplish in obtaining the right and blessed rain, that much can we men accomplish by our own strength and works to obtain that divine, heavenly, and eternal righteousness.⁷ Thus we can obtain it only through the **free imputation and indescribable gift of God**.

8. The Highest Art and Wisdom

Therefore the highest art and wisdom of Christians is....[How would you finish this sentence?] **...not to know the Law, to ignore works and all active righteousness, just as outside the people of God the highest wisdom is to know and study the Law, works, and active righteousness.**

It is a marvelous thing and unknown to the world to teach Christians to ignore the Law and to live before God as though there were no Law whatever. For if you do not ignore the Law and thus direct your thoughts to grace as though there were no Law but as though there were nothing but grace, **you cannot be saved**.⁸ **“For through the Law comes knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).**

9. The Performance of the Law Demanded (Why Was the Law Given?)

On the other hand, works and the performance of the Law must be demanded **in the world** as though there were no promise or grace. This is because of the stubborn, proud, and hardhearted, before whose eyes nothing must be set except the Law, in order that they may be terrified and humbled. **For the Law was given...**

...to terrify and kill the stubborn...

...and to exercise the old man.⁹

Both words must be correctly divided, according to the apostle **(2 Tim. 2:25 ff.)**.¹⁰

10. The Limits of the Law

This calls for a wise and faithful father who can moderate the Law in such a way that it stays within its **limits**. For if I were to teach men the Law in such a way that they suppose themselves to be justified by it before God, I would be going beyond the **limit** of the Law, confusing these two righteousnesses, the active and the passive, and would be a bad dialectician who does not properly distinguish. **But when I go beyond the old man, I also go beyond the Law.** For the flesh

⁶ Galatians 3:21

⁷ See Isaiah 44:1-5; 45:8

⁸ Here Luther states Ephesians 2:8 negatively.

⁹ Not to take the “old man” to 24 Hour Fitness, but to aggravate the “old man”/“flesh.” Like Bunyan’s dusty room.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 2:25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

or the old man, the Law and works, are all joined together. In the same way the spirit or the new man is joined to the promise and to grace.

Therefore when I see that a man is sufficiently contrite, oppressed by the Law, terrified by sin, and thirsting for comfort, then it is time for me to take the Law and active righteousness from his sight and to set forth before him, through the Gospel, the passive righteousness which excludes Moses and the Law and shows the promise of Christ, **who came for the afflicted and for sinners**. Here a man is raised up again and gains hope. Nor is he any longer under the Law; he is under grace, as the apostle says (**Rom. 6:14**): **"You are not under law but under grace."** How not under law? According to the new man, to whom the Law does not apply. For the Law had its **limits** until Christ, as Paul says below (**Gal. 3:24**): **"The Law, until Christ." When He came, Moses and the Law stopped. So did circumcision, Sacrifices, and the Sabbath. So did all the prophets.**

11. This Is Our Theology (Two Kinds of Righteousness / Two Worlds)

This is our theology, by which we teach a **precise distinction** between these **two kinds of righteousness**, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, **secular society** and **religion** may not be confused. **Both are necessary**, but both must be kept within their **limits**. Christian righteousness applies to the new man, and the righteousness of the Law applies to the old man, who is born of flesh and blood. Upon this latter, as upon an ass, a burden must be put that will oppress him. He must not enjoy the freedom of the spirit or of grace unless he has first put on the new man by faith in Christ, **but this does not happen fully in this life**. Then he may enjoy the kingdom and the ineffable gift of grace. **I am saying this in order that no one may suppose that we reject or prohibit good works, as the papists falsely accuse us because they understand neither what they themselves are saying nor what we are teaching.** They know nothing except the righteousness of the Law; and yet they claim the right to judge a doctrine that is far above and beyond the Law, a doctrine on which the carnal man is unable to pass judgment. Therefore it is inevitable that they be offended, for they cannot see any higher than the Law. Therefore whatever is above the Law is the greatest possible offense to them.

We set forth **two worlds**, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform **good works**. But as the earth does not bring forth fruit unless it has **first** been watered and made fruitful from above—for the earth cannot judge, renew, and rule the heavens, but the heavens judge, renew, rule, and fructify the earth, so that it may do what the Lord has commanded—**so also by the righteousness of the Law we do nothing even when we do much; we do not fulfill the Law even when we fulfill it**. Without any merit or work of our own, we must **first** be justified by Christian righteousness, which has nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law or with earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. We do not perform it; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works. **"As, therefore, we have borne the image of the earthly Adam," as Paul says, "let us bear the image of the heavenly one" (1 Cor. 15:49), who is a new man in a new world, where there is no Law, no sin, no conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation, and glory.**

12. Then Do We Do Nothing and Work Nothing in order to Obtain This Righteousness?

Then do we do nothing and work nothing in order to obtain this righteousness? I reply: **Nothing at all. For this righteousness means to do nothing, to hear nothing, and to know nothing about the Law or about works but to know and believe only this: that Christ has gone to the Father and is now invisible; that He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father, not as a Judge but as one who has been made for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption from God** (1 Cor. 1:30); in short, that He is our High Priest, interceding for us and reigning over us and in us through grace. Here one notices no sin and feels no terror or remorse of conscience. Sin cannot happen in this Christian righteousness; **for where there is no Law, there cannot be any transgression (Rom. 4:15)**. If, therefore, sin does not have a place here, there is no conscience, no terror, no sadness. Therefore John says: **"No one born of God commits sin" (1 John 3:9)**. But if there is any conscience or fear present, this is a sign that this righteousness has been withdrawn [by the Judaizes, for example], that grace has been lost sight of [by the Galatians], and that Christ is hidden and out of sight. But **where Christ is truly seen**, there must be full and perfect joy in the Lord and peace of heart, where the heart declares:

"Although I am a sinner according to the Law, judged by the righteousness of the Law, nevertheless I do not despair. I do not die, because Christ lives who is my righteousness and my eternal and heavenly life. In that righteousness and life I have no sin, conscience, and death. I am indeed a sinner according to the present life and its righteousness, as a son of Adam where the Law accuses me, death reigns and devours me. But above this life I have another righteousness, another life, which is Christ, the Son of God, who does not know sin and death but is righteousness and eternal life. For His sake this body of mine will be raised from the dead and delivered from the slavery of the Law and sin, and will be sanctified together with the spirit."

13. As Long As We Live Here

Thus as long as we live here, **both remain**. The flesh is accused, exercised [agitated], saddened, and crushed by the active righteousness of the Law. But the spirit rules, rejoices, and is saved by passive righteousness, **because it knows that it has a Lord sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Father, who has abolished the Law, sin, and death, and has trodden all evils underfoot, has led them captive and triumphed over them in Himself (Col. 2:15)**.

14. The Argument Reviewed (No Middle Ground)

In this epistle, therefore, Paul is concerned to instruct, comfort, and sustain us diligently in a perfect knowledge of this most excellent and Christian righteousness. For if the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost. And those in the world who do not teach it are either Jews or Turks or papists or sectarians. **For between these two kinds of righteousness, the active righteousness of the Law and the passive righteousness of Christ, there is no middle ground. Therefore he who has strayed away from this Christian righteousness will necessarily relapse into the active righteousness; that is, when he has lost Christ, he must fall into a trust in his own works.**

15. What We See Today

We see this today in the fanatical spirits and sectarians, who neither teach nor can teach anything correctly about this righteousness of grace. They have taken the words out of our mouth and out of our writings, and these only they speak and write. But the substance itself they cannot discuss, deal with, and urge, because they neither understand it nor can understand it. They cling only to the righteousness of the Law. Therefore they are and remain disciplinarians of works; nor can they rise beyond the active righteousness. Thus they remain exactly what they were under the pope. To be sure, they invent new names and new works; but the content remains the same. So it is that the Turks perform different works from the papists, and the papists perform different works from the Jews, and so forth. But although some do works that are more splendid, great, and difficult than others, the content remains the same, and only the quality is different. That is, the works vary only in appearance and in name. For they are still works. And those who do them are not Christians; they are hirelings, whether they are called Jews, Mohammedans, papists, or sectarians.

16. If We Want to Be Preachers and Teachers

Therefore we always repeat, urge, and inculcate this doctrine of faith or Christian righteousness, so that it may be observed by continuous use and may be precisely distinguished from the active righteousness of the Law. (For by this doctrine alone and through it alone is the church built, and in this it consists.) Otherwise we shall not be able to observe true theology but shall immediately become lawyers, ceremonialists, legalists, and papists. **Christ will be so darkened that no one in the church will be correctly taught or comforted.** Therefore **if we want to be preachers and teachers of others, we must take great care** in these issues and hold to this distinction between the righteousness of the Law and that of Christ. This distinction is easy to speak of; but in experience and practice it is the most difficult of all, even if you exercise and practice it diligently. For in the hour of death or in other conflicts of conscience these two kinds of righteousness come together more closely than you would wish or ask.

Therefore I admonish you, especially those of you who are to become instructors of consciences, as well as each of you individually, that you **exercise yourselves by study, by reading, by meditation, and by prayer, so that in temptation you will be able to instruct consciences, both your own and others, console them, and take them from the Law to grace, from active righteousness to passive righteousness, in short, from Moses to Christ.** In affliction and in the conflict of conscience it is the devil's habit to frighten us with the Law and to set against us the consciousness of sin, our wicked past, the wrath and judgment of God, hell and eternal death, so that thus he may drive us into despair, subject us to himself, and pluck us from Christ. **It is also his habit to set against us those passages in the Gospel in which Christ Himself requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to those who do not perform them.** If here we cannot distinguish between these two kinds of righteousness; if here by faith we do not take hold of Christ, who is sitting at the right hand of God, who is our life and our righteousness, and who makes intercession for us miserable sinners before the Father (Heb. 7:25), then we are under the Law and not under grace, and Christ is no longer a Savior. Then He is a lawgiver. Then there can be no salvation left, but sure despair and eternal death will follow.

17. What to Say to the Law

Therefore let us learn diligently this art of distinguishing between these two kinds of righteousness, in order that we may know how far we should obey the Law. We have said above that in a Christian the Law must not exceed its limits but should have its dominion only over the flesh, which is subjected to it and remains under it. When this is the case, the Law remains within its limits. But if it wants to ascend into the conscience and exert its rule there, see to it that you are a good dialectician and that you make the correct distinction. **Give no more to the Law than it has coming, and say to it: "Law, you want to ascend into the realm of conscience and rule there. You want to denounce its sin and take away the joy of my heart, which I have through faith in Christ. You want to plunge me into despair, in order that I may perish. You are exceeding your jurisdiction. Stay within your limits, and exercise your dominion over the flesh. You shall not touch my conscience. For I am baptized; and through the Gospel I have been called to a fellowship of righteousness and eternal life, to the kingdom of Christ, in which my conscience is at peace, where there is no Law but only the forgiveness of sins, peace, quiet, happiness, salvation, and eternal life. Do not disturb me in these matters. In my conscience not the Law will reign, that hard tyrant and cruel disciplinarian, but Christ, the Son of God, the King of peace and righteousness, the sweet Savior and Mediator. He will preserve my conscience happy and peaceful in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the knowledge of this passive righteousness."**

18. Good Works That Descend from Above

When I have this righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom, and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. If I am a magistrate, I perform the office which I have received by divine command. If I am a servant, I faithfully tend to my master's affairs. In short, **whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness not only cheerfully and gladly works in his calling but also submits himself for the sake of love to magistrates, also to their wicked laws, and to everything else in this present life—even, if need be, to burden and danger. For he knows that God wants this and that this obedience pleases Him.**

19. The Argument in Its Occasion

So far the argument of the epistle, which Paul sets forth because of the false teachers who had obscured this righteousness of faith among the Galatians. Against them he asserts his authority and office.