

The
ACTS
of the Apostles



Sharing the Gospel doesn't always lead to favorable responses, but God works through our faithfulness

Acts 4

Introduction

- We observe the responses of those who witness Peter and John's healing and Gospel proclamation. Some respond in faith and conversion, while others respond in hatred, threatening the apostles with violence.
- We also observe the faithful response of believers in Jerusalem when they hear about the threats made against the apostles, which is a prayer for boldness and power in their ongoing witness.

Christians should proclaim the Gospel
no matter what opposition they face

Acts 4:1-22

Arrested for preaching (1-4)

- As Peter and John are in the middle of spreading the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem, the Sadducees “came upon them.”
- The word for this phrase in the original language means “strength and suddenness.” The Sadducees did not arrive to listen, but to interrupt and make a scene.
- To understand this passage, we must understand who the Sadducees are.

Arrested for preaching (1-4)

- The Sadducees represented the “conservative” religious school of thought.
- They rejected the oral traditions of the Pharisees (the extra mandated rules not found in Scripture) because they considered only the written Torah valid.
- They did not believe anything existed beyond the grave, and thus considered the ideas of demons, angels, immortality, and resurrection to be false ideas.

Arrested for preaching (1-4)

- Because they belonged to the Jewish aristocracy, they wanted to make peace with the Romans in order to protect their fortunes.
- In return for their cooperation and support, Rome endowed their high priest and the rest of the Sadducees with substantial power.
- Given that their primary concern was the avoidance of Roman confrontation, we can see why they were annoyed with Peter and John's preaching.

Arrested for preaching (1-4)

- Peter and John are arrested for their preaching.
- The Sadducees, priests, and the temple captain are more than just indifferent or frustrated at the apostles; they hate them to the point of imprisoning them.
- More than just ignoring the Gospel, these Jewish aristocrats aggressively attack anything that could come in the way of their political leanings and benefits.

Arrested for preaching (1-4)

- While the religious leaders rejected the message Peter and John were preaching, others accepted the truth of the Gospel and placed their faith in Jesus.
- Luke mentions that “many” of those who heard the word of the Gospel believed it, totaling 5,000 people.
- Given that the new converts have steadily grown from 120 to 5,000. This becomes “many thousands.”

Questioned by the Sanhedrin (5-7)

- Peter and John are questioned by the Sanhedrin about the healing they performed and the Gospel message they shared.
- The primary question they are asked is “By what name did you do this?”
- Invoking a name meant releasing the power of the person who bears that name. They want to know whose power and presence was released in this healing.

Peter's Preaching (8-12)

- Peter is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” who empowers his speech and enables Peter to defend the message behind his “good deed.”
- Peter tells them plainly whose name he is ministering in and concludes that there is “no other name” in the world apart from Jesus’ that can save and heal.
- Though the religious leaders continue to reject the message, Peter and John remain faithful to their calling.

Ruler's reaction (13-22)

- When the leaders see the boldness of the apostles, they cannot help but acknowledge Peter and John must have been with Jesus.
- They have no words to argue against the miracle they have witnessed and the message they have heard.
- Their hands are bound because of the good work done by the apostles. It would look odd to punish the apostles for helping this man, especially in a culture that values helping the lowly.

Ruler's reaction (13-22)

- Although they cannot deny the power of the Gospel, the Sanhedrin try to stop it from spreading further by deciding to threaten the apostles.
- For Peter and John, however, there is no stopping them until the entire world has heard the truth about Jesus.
- Application: Through these verses, we see that when we faithfully witness, the Gospel is faithfully spread, even despite those who try to stop it.

Christians can always rely on God's power to
work through their faithful obedience

Acts 4:23-31

Released and reported (23-28)

- Peter and John are finally released after their first experience of public opposition.
- Upon sharing the threats made to them, Peter and John's faith-family "lifted their voices together to God" and prayed. Notice that they prayed together.
- Application: In times of crisis and persecution, the Church should come together to pray corporately.

Released and reported (23-28)

- Those in attendance begin their prayer by exalting God as sovereign creator over all of history and time.
- Our prayers should be grounded in our great God, not our circumstances.
- Second, they acknowledge God not only as Creator, but as the God who speaks into creation's history through people by His Spirit.

Released and reported (23-28)

- Third, these believers pray Scripture back to God, basing their intercession on His Word.
- Referencing Psalm 2:1–2, they recall that in the past, great rulers have tried to thwart God’s plans by threatening His chosen people and anointing kings, always to no avail.
- Application: We should use Scripture when we pray.

Believers pray for boldness (29-32)

- They apply the same concepts to their current situation, trusting that as God's purpose prevailed in Christ's death and Resurrection.
- Finally, we see that instead of praying for relief or removal from their circumstances, they pray for further courage and boldness in their witness of the Gospel, regardless of persecution. In the face of great threat, the Church didn't ask for escape, they asked for empowerment.

Believers pray for boldness (29-32)

- God answers their petition by shaking the ground, a signal of His presence among them (cf. Isaiah 6:4; Exodus 19:18).
- He then fills them with the Holy Spirit, giving them boldness to continue spreading the Gospel.
- Application: May we, like these believers, pray for the courage to stay faithful even in crisis, and also experience the God-given boldness required to do so.

REFORMATION

Indulgences: Started Reformation

- An indulgence was “a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins.”
- By the late Middle Ages, the abuse of indulgences became a serious problem which the Church was unable to restrain effectively.
- Johann Tetzel: “As soon as the gold in the casket rings, the rescued soul to heaven springs.” [*So wie das Geld im Kasten klingt; die Seele aus dem Fegfeuer springt.*]

Johann Tetzl



Indulgences: Started Reformation

- People in the Middle Ages were ignorant of biblical truth. Superstition was rampant. Doctrines like purgatory were superb for keeping citizens in fear.
- Tetzel fed on those superstitious fears. He was able to convince people their departed loved one was burning in flames in purgatory.
- He convinced them that they should to pay money to release them from their torment.

Martin Luther - 95 Theses

- Luther objected to the corrupt practice of selling indulgences and wrote out his 95 Theses, which were a list of questions and propositions for debate.
- Luther hung the document on the door of the church to announce the ensuing academic discussion around it that he was organizing.
- Melanchthon later said Luther posted these on October 31, 1517.

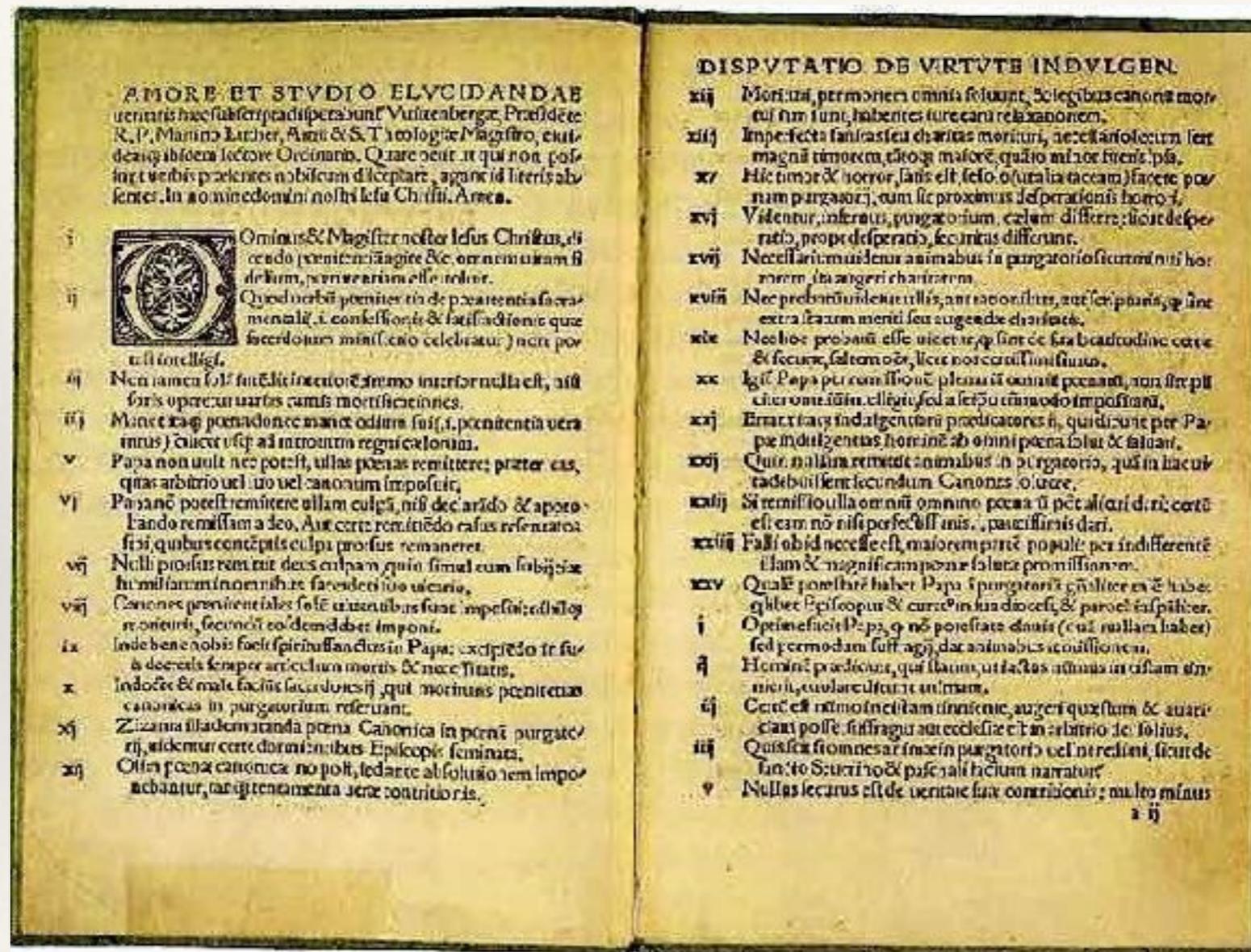
Martin Luther - 95 Theses



Martin Luther - 95 Theses

- The 95 Theses were reprinted and became the foundation of the Protestant Reformation.
- They were written in a humble and academic tone, questioning rather than accusing.
- The first two of the theses contained his idea that God intended believers to seek repentance and that faith alone would lead to salvation.

Martin Luther - 95 Theses



DISPVATIO DE VIRTUTE INDVLGEN.

- xij Mortui, per moneta omnia solunt. De legibus canonis mor-
 tui sunt, habentes tunc eam relaxationem.
- xij Imperfecti sanctas seu charitas moriunt, necessarios locum ser-
 magnam timorem, deo q. maiore, quatio ad hoc finis. p. s.
- xv Hic timor & horror, sanis est, seculo. (sua licet tunc) facere por-
 nam purgatorij, cum sic proximus desperationis homo.
- xvi Videntur, inferni, purgatorij, eadem differre: licet despera-
 tio, prope desperationem, securitas differunt.
- xvii Necessarium uidentur animabus in purgatorio sicut nisi hor-
 rorem in aegeri charitatem.
- xviii Nec prohiberi uidentur illis, aut rationibus, aut ser. p. s. q. sine
 extra se autem menti seu auge de charitate.
- xix Nec hoc probant esse uicem, q. sicut de h. b. caduone certe
 & securus, sed tam o. s. licet nos certum in uicibus.
- xx Igitur Papa per commissionem plenam omnium poenitentia, non sicut
 cher omnia in. eligi, sed a ser. u. in modo impossibili.
- xxi Erant tunc indulgentiarum predicatoribus, quidam per Pa-
 pa indulgentias homines ab omni poena solui & saluari.
- xxii Quia nullam remittit animabus in purgatorio, quia in hac ubi
 tadebissent secundum Canones o. uice.
- xxiii Si remissio ulla omnium omnino poena si per al. (qui d. r. i. cordi
 est eam non nisi perfectissimis, paucissimis dari.
- xxiiii Falsi ob id necesse est, maiorem parte populi per indifferentem
 illam & magnificam poenam soluta promissam.
- xxv Quae potestas habet Papa in purgatorio? quia licet ex e. habe-
 q. h. b. Episcopus & curia in sua dioecesi & parochia p. h. b. e.
- i Optime facit P. p. q. non potestatis dicit (cui nullam habet)
 sed per modum suffragij, dar animabus a uicariis.
- ii Hominum predicator, qui h. b. u. ut factos animas in istam an-
 niam, euolare uolunt in istam.
- iii Certum est in motu istam inuenit, augei quod sum & auri-
 ciam posse suffragij aut ecclesiae et in arbitrio de solius.
- iiii Quis scit si omnes in poena purgatorio uel in rebus, sicut de
 h. b. o. s. u. r. i. o. & p. s. e. r. a. l. i. h. c. i. u. m. n. a. r. a. t. o. r.
- v Nullus securus est de ueritate suae contritionis; nullus minus

Theology that Started Reformation

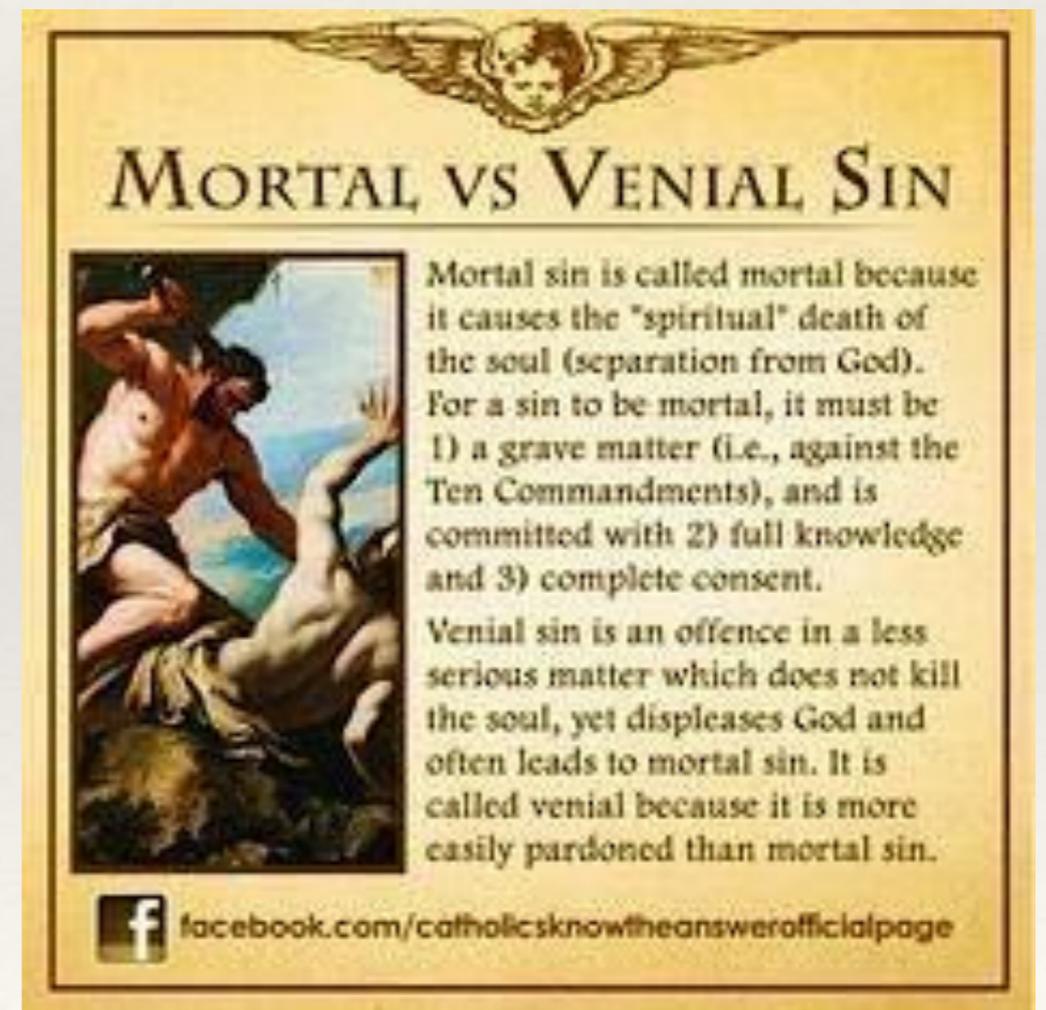
- In early 16th-century Europe, Luther was one of a number of theologians who were beginning to question some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Around this time, translations of original texts became available: the Bible and Augustine's writing, that emphasized the primacy of the Bible rather than Church officials as the ultimate religious authority.

Theology that Started Reformation

- Augustine believed that humans could not reach salvation by their own acts, but that only God could bestow salvation by his divine grace.
- In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church taught that salvation was possible through good works (works of righteousness) that pleased God.
- Luther began to accept these two beliefs (primacy of the Bible and salvation by grace).

Two Categories of Sin

- The Catholic Church teaches that there are two categories of sin: mortal sins and venial sins.
 - Mortal sins imperil your soul and can send you to hell.
 - Venial sins are less serious breaches of God's law.



Mortal Sins

- Three conditions must be met for mortal sin to exist:
 - **Grave Matter:** The act itself is intrinsically evil and immoral (murder, rape, incest, perjury, adultery).
 - **Full Knowledge:** The person must know that what they're doing or planning to do is evil and immoral.
 - **Deliberate Consent:** The person must freely choose to commit the act or plan to do it.

Venial Sins

- Venial sins are any sins that meet one or two of the conditions needed for a mortal sin but do not fulfill all three at the same time.
- Venial sin only weakens the soul with sickness but doesn't kill the grace within.
- Venial sins aren't deadly to the life of grace, but like minor infections in the body, if left untended, may deteriorate into a more serious condition.

Result of the Reformation

- The Protestant Reformation changed Christianity forever.
- Leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin transformed Christianity and led to the emergence of the Protestant denominations that exist today.
- The “Five Solas” are Latin phrases developed during the Reformation to summarize their theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.

Five Solas

- *Sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”)
- *Sola Fide* (“faith alone”)
- *Sola Gratia* (“grace alone”)
- *Solus Christus* (“Christ alone”)
- *Soli Deo Gloria* (“to the glory of God alone”)

Five Solas

- *Sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”)
 - The Scriptures are our ultimate and trustworthy authority for faith and practice.
 - Every word of the 66 books of the Bible is inspired by God’s Holy Spirit.
 - Key verse: 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Five Solas

- *Sola Fide* (“faith alone”), *Sola Gratia* (“grace alone”)
 - We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ because of God’s grace and Christ’s merit.
 - We are not saved by our merits or declared righteous by our good works.
 - Key verse: Ephesians 2:8-9

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith;
and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;
not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Five Solas

SOLA SCRIPTURA

SOLA GRATIA

SOLA FIDE

SOLUS CHRISTUS

SOLI DEO GLORIA