



Issues, Etc.TM

Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

+ + + + +

"Reformation Confessor: Martin Luther"

Guest:

Dr. Ken Schurb

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, MO

Former Professor of Theology at Concordia University Ann Arbor & Assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Monday, October 21, 2013

+ + + + +

AUDIO CLIP FROM "LUTHER" MOVIE:

"Will you recant or will you not?"

LUTHER: Since Your Majesty and Your Lordships desire a simple reply, unless I am convinced by Scripture and by plain reason, and not by popes and councils who have so often contradicted themselves, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe. I cannot, and I will not, recant. Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me.

WILKEN: Famous words of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. Of course, that's the "Here I stand" statement, but how did he get to that point? How did he come to stand there before, well, really, the religious authorities of his day, and the political authorities of his day? Asked to recant, but holding fast to the Word of God, bound in conscience to that Word. And where did the 16th century reformer Martin Luther go from the Diet of Worms and from his "Here I stand" statement?

Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* We're coming to you live from the studios of Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, Illinois. I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in. It's *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. The theme is "Reformation Confessors," starting with 16th century reformer Martin Luther.

Kicking off *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week on this Monday afternoon, Dr. Ken Schurb. He's pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri, formerly served as a theology professor at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is Assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Ken, welcome back to *Issues, Etc.*

SCHURB: It is a delight to be with you on Reformation Week, of all things. By the way, Todd, in our circuit, we already had our circuit Reformation service because of some scheduling glitches with the speaker. We had it yesterday, so we're in a Reformation frame of mind here in north-central Missouri.

WILKEN: You say there's a theme in Luther's life and in his teaching, and that theme is the care of souls. What do you mean by that?

SCHURB: Luther, no matter what else you might say about him, was a pastor. That animated his work as a professor, as a confessor, as a reformer. Every aspect of his work, he was trying to care for souls who need the grace of God in Christ, starting with his own. And the thing that Luther understood very well from his own times of spiritual struggle in his youth, which continued, really, throughout his life, is that fundamental to the care of souls is certainty – certainty of one's salvation. That is precisely what Martin Luther could never find in himself. And he was very much aware of this. He became an Augustinian friar shortly after receiving his own Master of Arts degree at about age 22 in 1505. He

was just anguished over his sins, as he was an Augustinian friar. He became a priest, but that really didn't help. He went through all sorts of religious exercises; that didn't really help. Finally, his superior, Staupitz, said to him, "You know, you've got too much time on your hands. You're thinking too much about your own sins." But Luther said, "My sins are so terrible." "You need to go and study theology. That's where you're going to find the answers for this." Well, Staupitz was speaking better than he knew. So he sends Luther to study at the university, the university there in Wittenberg, where Luther would later teach. He got his Doctor of Theology degree in 1512, and he took up the task of teaching. And more than anything else, it was that daily grind of having to prepare for his obligations to his students that drove Luther to study even more because he's after that certainty of salvation.

WILKEN: Talk a bit about, to kind of set the framework around not only how Luther comes to that discovery through his study of Scripture, but also how he comes to really understand this as "The Reformation" of the Church. It literally charts the course of his life. The system of salvation that he and virtually everyone else at his time believed in and why it troubled him so, why it was so inadequate to this struggle of soul that he was so familiar with.

SCHURB: Well, theology, as Luther had learned it, and as you say, as lots of other people too in his time, was based on the relatively obvious notion that our own love, our own mercy, our own repentance, our own faith, as sinners in this sinful world, are always flawed and imperfect and incomplete, because, finally, they are selfish. But theologians of the time taught that there is a spark of goodness within everyone. And that spark could be fed with divine grace – now, that is grace defined as the ability to do more and more good. And one had grace infused into him through the

seven Sacraments of the Church, so that a person would gradually get to do more and more what God wants, and be more and more the person God wants him to be. So the basic advice that Luther heard and that he eventually railed against, as others did, was, “Do what is in you. God will not refuse grace to those who do. Maybe your faith can’t be perfect, but that’s okay. Believe as much as you can. Maybe you can’t be totally sincere, but be as sincere as you can. Do what is in you. Get started. Do the best you can. God will see that you’re trying and he’ll boost you along.

WILKEN: So that’s the basic framework for understanding where Luther was thinking, how he was operating theologically. Talk a bit about the task that he had as a university professor. He lectures on almost whole parts of Holy Scripture over several years. What would that mean? What was it like – you said the preparation was key for him – but we picture kind of going in for 50 minutes and listening to someone lecture. You take your notes, you ask your questions, you go home. What was the classroom like with Luther?

SCHURB: Well, not all that different. Generally speaking, professors in those days dictated a lot more – that is to say, they said things which they expected their students to write directly down. Now, Luther was in a position with his subject matter, that is, books of the Bible, that a lot of other professors didn’t necessarily enjoy. They had study editions of these books of the Bible, so they could make marginal notes. And so as Luther begins to the task of teaching, he begins sort of asking himself, “What are the key passages in a book of the Bible that I’m teaching that I really need to emphasize and that I really need to call to my students’ attention so that they’ll make the appropriate note?” He lectured on the Psalms between 1513 and 1515, and during that time he began rethinking the whole idea of what the righteousness of God is. He

tended to think of it as punitive – God’s righteousness by which He demands righteousness from us. And he began thinking, oh, when he was about halfway through the Psalms, that that might be somewhat restrictive, and the righteousness of God could mean something else – a gift of God. In 1515 to 1516, he lectures on Romans, and he begins rethinking the whole idea of a spark of goodness in everybody. In 1516 to 1517 he lectures on Galatians. In 1517 to 1518 he lectures on Hebrews; and he begins rethinking exactly what faith is. While Luther was giving those lectures, he posted the 95 Theses – October 31st, 1517. We’ll come back to that, I’m sure. By 1519, when he comes up with a little work called “Sermon on the Two Kinds of Righteousness,” he finally kind of has it all come together in his own thinking. It has come through kind of in snitches and snatches to that point, but he’s finally able to kind of look back on them and say, “Okay, now I think I’ve got it. Scripture talks at least in terms of two kinds of righteousness. One is utterly a gift. It’s the passive righteousness that we receive. We don’t do anything for it; we receive it from God as a gift on account of Christ. It is really the righteousness of Christ with which we are being clothed, which God is reckoning to us. And thereby we become righteous in His sight. Not because of our works, or because of our doing what is in us, but because of His gift. And then there’s also active righteousness – that we as God’s people then turn around and do righteous works.” So, as I say, by 1519, this is pretty much all falling into place. And here’s what Luther said about this breakthrough, as it were, later on. He says, “I hated the idea from Romans 1:17: ‘In the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed.’ For I had been taught to understand the term ‘the righteousness of God’ in the formal, or active, sense, according to which God is righteous and punishes the righteous sinner. At last, meditating day and night by the mercy of God, I gave heed to the

context of the words – in it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He through faith is righteous shall live.’ Then I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live, by a gift of God, that is, by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered Paradise itself through gates that had been flung open, and an entirely new side of the Scriptures opened itself to me.” That’s Luther’s own summation of where he had come over a period of years.

WILKEN: Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. It’s Monday of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. The theme for the entire week is “Reformation Confessors.” We’re beginning with Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer. Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri, formerly served as a theology professor at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and as an assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

More of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues with Dr. Ken Schurb right after this.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I’m Todd Wilken. We’re talking about 16th century reformer Martin Luther, as part of this Monday’s kickoff of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. Reformation reformers is our theme.

Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. Ken, a moment ago you were talking about the course of Luther’s lectures, and right there at the end of his Galatians lectures and the beginning of his Hebrews lectures, as he’s following these his courses with his students, he posts the 95 Theses. What moves him to do this, and what are these documents?

SCHURB: Well, the 95 Theses have to do with the sale of indulgences. The whole issue with the 95 Theses that Luther posted in October of 1517 was indulgences – the idea was that Christians were brought by death not straight to heaven, but to purgatory because they still had the stain of sins, particularly those sins that were unacknowledged and unconfessed. And so they had to undergo a period of being purged of those sins before going to heaven. An indulgence was, in effect, a way for the church to make it easier for the sinner to bear that punishment, to reduce the number of years that one would be in purgatory. Now, nobody would know, according to this thinking, at the time of their death, how many years they did have ahead of them in purgatory, but these indulgences would reduce that. And, of course, the big prize was the plenary indulgence, which would wipe out whatever time one had in purgatory. Strictly speaking, the practice of “selling indulgences” was nothing really that much out of character from the theology that we were talking about earlier, that Luther and others had learned. It was a special case of confession and penance and spiritual exercises that were commended to Christians. So a Dominican friar by the name of John Tetzel, was preaching that indulgence – it’s kind of a complicated backstory here – the money was going to go for the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, which is there, of course, to this day. Luther protests against this, because he’s not so sure that these indulgences are even something that the Pope would want in the form that Tetzel is preaching them. He doesn’t know that the Pope has actually authorized this sale of indulgences. At that point, Luther was kind of putting the best construction on things. So he posts these 95 Theses, which get translated into German. They were originally in Latin; Luther meant for them as propositions for academic debate, but they got translated and they caught on like wildfire. They were printed and distributed throughout German

lands. “Here’s somebody who’s standing up to Rome.” And that created quite a sensation.

WILKEN: And you say we ought to note that at the time of the 95 Theses, he is not objecting to indulgences themselves, or to an idea of indulgences, but to the abuse.

SCHURB: No, nor to the idea even that the Pope has the authority to issue indulgences. He’s just raising all sorts of interesting questions. I’m always amazed that people want to sort of celebrate the Reformation by reading the 95 Theses or something like that. You’ll find Luther very much a devoted son of the Church and a devoted follower of the Pope in these 95 Theses. He’s raising certain questions. The most noteworthy of the 95 Theses is about 2/3 of the way through – “That the true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.” Now, that’s a point that Luther’s going to come back to again and again, after he’s left a lot of the other things that he still accepts in the 95 Theses far behind. Luther did *not*, however, keep on talking about indulgences as if they were the sole problem, simply because as the sort of media sensation erupted and Luther is being thrust into wider and wider circles and he’s being called upon to defend himself to more and more authorities, he is being led to think in broader circles about these matters. He did openly question the “Do what is in you” theology that he and others had learned. And that comes across very vividly, Todd, about six months later after the 95 Theses, in April of 1518 when Staupitz, his superior, gives him the opportunity to address the Augustinian order, of which he was a member, and talk to them about the broader issues, the broader theological issues that are involved here. This is not just a debate over the sale of indulgences, or at least it’s not by this time. This meeting is held in Heidelberg, where we have Luther’s famous Heidelberg Theses, where he begins to explore the

theme of the theology of the cross. And probably the most noteworthy of the Heidelberg Theses – they were both philosophical and theological theses – these were a couple of the theological ones. “That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which are made. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.” So Luther is emphasizing now the role of Christ – His cross, His forgiveness; not trying to penetrate the invisible things of God, but trying to stay with the things that God has revealed, trying to focus on the cross and its benefits rather than the glory of God, with which you can get so caught up, and which becomes just another path, finally, of works righteousness. Well, as Luther is in the process of defending the 95 Theses, he thinks in all sorts of directions. He starts questioning the idea of a Treasury of Merits, which was behind the whole theory of indulgences. And because of all this, I want to emphasize, Todd, a thinking pastor who is concerned about the souls of the people that he is preaching to.

WILKEN: Trace for us, if you would – and I think you’re quite right, that it’s often sad that we, the heirs of the Reformation, sometimes stop the story of the Reformation here or another chapter hence – but take us through how Luther’s thinking continues to reevaluate, and continues to hone the edge of the Gospel in his theology. How does it go?

SCHURB: Well, it’s a tumultuous three years, if we take the three years from April 1518, when he presents these theses to the Augustinians at Heidelberg, to April of 1521, where he makes that speech that we began the hour with, at the Diet of Worms. Luther is continuing to study the Scriptures. He’s also studying church history. He comes to

that mature understanding of justification that I was reading to him reflecting on, prior to the break, and now he starts applying it. He applies it – forced to, really, by the circumstances and by the people who are challenging him. So he applies it to individual Christian life. He applies it to corporate Christian life, the life of the Church. Luther started looking to Scripture alone – that is to say, not popes, not councils – as the source for Christian faith and life. Now, during this whole time, Luther is being attacked by several different theologians and church officials. He's condemned by prestigious university faculties of theology, like the one in Paris. He's excommunicated by the Pope, he ends up being banned by the Emperor, and he becomes this media celebrity. So there's a lot of people who are there at Worms to watch Luther come in, and who heard that he made that speech, even if they weren't present in the hall when he made it, and who watched him leave, and it's a good thing for Luther that his Prince, Frederick the Wise, had him spirited off under the guise, really, of a kidnapping by a bunch of thugs. These were actually soldiers in the service of Frederick the Wise, who put Luther on ice, as it were, at the Wartburg Castle for nearly a year to save his own life.

WILKEN: With only about a minute here, at least begin what is probably another of Luther's greatest clarifying moments, and it's done in the course of a very public debate of letters – documents – between him and probably the biggest scholar of the day, who Luther proved himself to be equal to, by the way: Erasmus. With about a minute or so, begin that story.

SCHURB: Luther had been reading Erasmus for quite a while. Erasmus was a celebrated humanist scholar; one of the biggest names among scholarly circles in all of Europe, really. Luther is particularly grateful for his edition of the New Testament, which came out the very same

year that the 95 Theses were posted. He had great respect for Erasmus as a linguist, as a man of learning. But he said, "The more I read Erasmus on theology, the less I'm satisfied." Because Erasmus' idea of religion was kind of a warm-hearted piety; an imitation of Christ. Luther urged assertions, and he treasured the clarity of Scripture. Erasmus wants to, eh, not make statements that are very definite about anything.

WILKEN: We'll take a break. When we come back, we'll pick up the story of Luther and Erasmus and how it not only shapes Luther's thinking, but brings about one of the more important conclusions that he draws, that will later be, in many ways, a foundation upon which the later reformers are able to build and continue to make the bold confession, beginning with Martin Luther.

Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest; it's *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. The theme of this week: Reformation Confessors. Martin Luther is the subject. We'll be right back.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: For this *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week, we are studying Reformation Confessors. On this Monday, October the 21st. Martin Luther is our subject. Ken Schurb is our guest.

Pick up where you left off with Luther and Erasmus, what eventually becomes a debate over human will, Ken.

SCHURB: Yeah, and I want to pick up where we left off talking about Luther and the care of souls, too. We've kind of seen him caring for the souls of his students as a professor, which he would continue to do throughout his career. He gets involved with the whole indulgence controversy because he's concerned about the people he's preaching to, as a preacher there in Wittenberg to the people of the common

congregation. He's also doing this whole thing with Erasmus. Luther's work on the *Bondage of the Will*, which is the opposite of Erasmus' on the freedom of the will, and he chooses his title, Luther does, very definitely, to bring that out. Luther is trying to respond to Erasmus out of a concern also for Erasmus' soul. He starts by acknowledging that of all the people who have tried to respond to him, and of all the people who have criticized Luther's writings – and he's written a lot by 1525 – he says, "You, Erasmus, have put your finger on the key issue here." Actually, what he says is, "Erasmus, you have me by the throat. If I'm wrong about this point, then everything else I've said is going to fall apart. On the other hand, if I'm right about this point, then everything else that you've said, in effect, is going to fall apart." So he thanks Erasmus for pointing to the key issue. And the key issue is: is salvation truly by grace, the unmerited love of God for us through Christ, through faith? Or is it a matter of human deserving? Do human beings have any kind of free will by which to commend themselves to God, make the decision for Christ, et cetera? And Luther says it very clearly: if salvation is solely by grace and received through faith, then the human will is bound in spiritual matters. Now, Luther does also make the point in the book that human beings are, of course, fit subjects to hear the Gospel. God did not make heaven for geese, Luther says. But they can't rely on any kind of inherent freedom on their part to respond positively to that Gospel. Luther says, strictly speaking, if you're going to talk about free will at all, only God has free will. And then a little later in the book, he kind of allows, "Well, if you're going to talk about free will on the part of human beings, use it for the things that are," he says, "beneath human beings. Not the things above." In other words, we can't reach up with any kind of free will. Yeah, you can decide which pair of socks to put on in the morning, and even more consequential things than that, like who

you're getting married to. But you can't make this decision for God. Erasmus, on his part, had laid an awful lot on the premise that God gives all these commands to people. And if God gives commands, well, He must also expect that people can carry them out. And Luther says that doesn't follow. It doesn't follow that we must be able to carry out God's commands. What's the whole point of Paul's, for example, discussion in the first couple of chapters of Romans, if not to suggest that we are incapable of keeping these commands. So Luther very much gets into Erasmus' face theologically, using all the weapons of a scholastic theologian, but he does it as a pastoral act because he's even concerned about Erasmus' soul.

WILKEN: Let's take a question on this subject from one of our listeners in Kansas City. Mike is on the line there. Mike, thanks for waiting.

MIKE: Yeah, thank you, Pastor Wilken. I wish people listening would consider supporting *Issues, Etc.* as a great resource. And Dr. Schurb, I appreciate the great topic and I can't tell you, you guys there at *Issues, Etc.*, you just continue to ride my hobbyhorse. I can't tell you how much I appreciate that. And Dr. Schurb, just not too long ago, I finished reading Luther's book *Bondage of the Will*. And I was actually referred to that book not by any person, but because it's mentioned in our *Book of Concord*. And our *Book of Concord*, it mentions that work from Luther specifically, and so I thought, well, I wonder what's up with that. So I ordered the book and got the book, and I can't tell you what an eye-opener it was. You talk about Luther reasoning from the Scriptures. There are some things that he does in that book; for example, he uses the terms "indicatives" and "imperatives" about a dozen different times in order to refute Erasmus and the statements Erasmus is making. And if evangelicals would simply look at the

Scriptures with this idea of “Is this an indicative or an imperative,” it would clear up so many misunderstandings for them. And the other thing I wanted to mention was that, you know, the copy that I have here, if you would just take where it’s mentioned “Erasmus” or “Erasmus’ diatribe,” if you would take that and substitute the word, “American church” and then wherever it mentions free will, take that and substitute the words “decision theology.” I mean, this book could have been written today. I can’t believe it’s 500 years old. And the question I have for you is, though, the copy that I have is translated by J.I. Packer, and I’m just wondering, is that the best translation? And then also, Luther evidently said that of all the works that he has done throughout his entire life, he would – I’ll have to paraphrase, because I can’t remember his quote exactly – but he would basically throw them all into the trash except the Catechism and *Bondage of the Will*. And I’m wondering did he really mean that a lot of the stuff that he wrote was erroneous, or is he simply trying to exaggerate the importance of *Bondage of the Will*?

WILKEN: Two questions, there. Ken, what is your response?

SCHURB: I think that probably the translation that I rely on the most, although you do have to be a little wary of it, is the Packer-Johnston translation. There are others: the one by Gordon Rupp, the American edition, and so forth. As usual, with translations, there is no perfect translation, but I think the Packer-Johnston one tends to be as kind of “wooden,” and I like wooden translations, especially when you’re doing careful academic work. So that one’s probably the one that I use as much as any.

And, I’m sorry, Todd, what was the other question?

WILKEN: The second question he had was: Luther is said to have said, near the end of

his life, “I’d throw away everything I’ve written except for the catechisms and the *Bondage of the Will*. And Mike wants to know if that’s a hyperbolic statement to emphasize the importance of those documents?

SCHURB: Well, it certainly does emphasize the importance of them. There were other times when Luther said that other things were the best thing he ever wrote. He thought, on another occasion, that the best thing he ever wrote, although he acknowledged that it was really sermons he preached that had kind of been put together by somebody else, but he still thought it was his best book, was his sermons on the 14th, 15th, 16th chapters of John. So, you know, Luther’s the kind of guy who will make off-the-cuff statements like that. There is no question, though, that the catechisms and the *Bondage of the Will* are among the most influential things that Luther ever wrote.

WILKEN: Talk about those catechisms, if you would, kind of under the theme of Luther as confessor. We’ve got a few minutes before our break.

SCHURB: Yeah. Luther is sort of moving toward being a confessor; that is, actually writing documents that become part of the Lutheran confessions. With the Small and Large Catechisms, which really, again, came out of his own pastoral concern and his pastoral experience. He had encouraged his prince, the Elector, John – by now, Frederick the Wise has died and his brother has taken his place – to begin a visitation of all the churches in his territories, to just find out what’s going on in these parishes. Luther emphasized that if the prince did that, he was acting not as a prince, but as a church member who had the wherewithal to mount an effort like that. And, boy, he says, “We found wretchedness.” The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatsoever of Christian teaching. And, unfortunately,

many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching them. People live as though they were pigs and irrational beasts. It's this that leads Luther to say, "I am just now beginning to prepare a catechism for the raw pagans." And so he puts it out, kind of in two different editions, if you will – a student edition and a teacher's guide: the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism.

WILKEN: Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. It's *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week on this Monday, October the 21st. When we come back, we'll talk a little bit more about the two catechisms of Martin Luther – why he valued them so much, and then we'll talk about Luther later in his life. Stay tuned.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I'm Todd Wilken. We're talking about 16th century reformer Martin Luther, kicking off this Monday of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest.

Ken, pick up with the catechisms we were talking about before. He writes the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, as he says, for the "rank, raw pagans." And his concerns there are pretty obvious. What do they contain?

SCHURB: Doctrine. That's the one-word thing that I think we have to emphasize, and unfortunately, I think, these days, it doesn't get emphasized, perhaps, as much as it should. The Small Catechism, in particular - I mean, just look at the statistics. It's a book of doctrine. 22% is direct quotation of Scripture, like the Ten Commandments themselves, the Lord's Prayer itself, passages on baptism, the Words of Institution, or the Lord's Supper. 22% of the book is just directly quoting Scripture. 31% of it is exposition of a passage that was just quoted. So over half of the book is directly commenting on the text of Scripture. There is relatively little, unlike other catechisms of the time, about the emotional state of the

person writing the catechism or the one reading it. Very little about external behavior, by comparison. Now, I don't mean to say that the catechism is strictly a textbook, especially the Small Catechism. It has a lot more use than that. But we do have to understand that it is a book of teaching, a book of doctrine from Scripture centering in the sacrifice of Christ. Really, the whole catechism centers in that 2nd Article of the Creed and Luther's explanation of it. Therefore Luther said, "We'll never completely master this in this life." He said in the preface to the Large Catechism, and I'll just nominate this, Todd, as my favorite Luther quote for our purposes today – you ask me what my favorite Luther quote; it depends on what the purpose is. But for this, I'll say here's my favorite Luther quote: "Every morning and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and I do it gladly. It is highly profitable daily to read the catechism and make it the subject of meditation and conversation. In such reading, conversation, and meditation, the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and fervor, so that day by day we relish and appreciate the catechism more greatly." So the heart of the catechism, for Luther, is the Ten Commandments, which tell us the demands of God; the Creed, which gives us the gifts of God in creation, redemption, sanctification; and the Lord's Prayer, where we speak out of faith and we cry out for faith to God. And then the rest of the parts of the Christian doctrine in the catechism are the specific ways that God brings his grace into our lives very, very vividly: baptism, absolution, the Lord's Supper. The catechism was called "the layman's Bible," and in many ways, that's what it functions as to this day.

WILKEN: Marilyn listens in Wheaton, Illinois. She's got a question. She says, "In the movie 'Luther,' they have Martin Luther quoting Psalm 119:94: 'I am yours; save me.'" She asks, "Is this a verse or phrase that became some sort of motto to him in real life, as they made it seem in the movie?"

SCHURB: Not that I know of. I was kind of surprised that they made such a big deal out of that passage in the film. It's not necessarily a bad passage to use with regard to Luther, but I'm not that certain that he quoted it to the degree that the movie would suggest.

WILKEN: Ann listens in St. Louis, she's waiting on the line. Hi, Ann.

ANN: Oh, hi. First of all, at my little church in Crestwood, we're studying *Bondage of the Will*, too, just a small handful of us, and there are times when he responds so blatantly to Erasmus that the little group we're with are sitting there laughing out loud. He's just so abrupt. The other thing: I was Roman Catholic up until the time I was 40, and as a little girl, we got holy cards, pictures of the saints, and it might say on the back, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph." And if you said that, you got 300 days off indulgences. Or if it said, "St. Joseph, pray for us," something like that, 300 days indulgence. So that was something that was still going on as late as the 50s and the 60s of the last century, and perhaps it still goes on today; I'm not sure. The other thing I wanted to say is, maybe people are diseased by these things more easily because, as a Catholic, I could not find a Bible study to go to. I couldn't learn the Bible. There really wasn't anyone teaching it. I guess I could have pursued it more, but instead I left the church and went on a path of different kinds of churches, until I landed in a Lutheran church, and until *Issues, Etc.* came along. So [with] the lack of Bible

studies and such, you kind of had to go elsewhere. Thank you.

WILKEN: Ann, thank you very much for listening in St. Louis. Ken, what are your thoughts?

SCHURB: Luther always remained a professor of the Bible, and if you read even the books of Luther in American translation, there's probably more of his works in which he is expounding the Scriptures, whether in lectures or in sermons than in any other kind of thing that we've got from Luther. So he was definitely interested in people knowing the Scriptures. But knowing the Scriptures, understanding that Christ is the heart and center of the whole thing. And understanding how these Scriptures applied to their lives. Once a professor of mine made, I think, kind of a cogent remark; I'm not sure it's true in every single case of every exposition of Luther, even the mature Luther. But generally speaking, Luther wasn't just content to expound the Scriptures. As far as he's concerned, exposition has not really concluded. It may have started, but it hasn't concluded until he has applied it to Christian life. At the heart of that application, it's not saying you must now do this, this and this, but the heart of the application is showing the forgiveness of sins on account of Jesus.

WILKEN: An excellent final question comes to us via Twitter, from @lovemelast, asking, "What theological areas of Luther's theology impacted the most in the Christian sphere? What made his theology distinctive?" A few minutes to respond to that final question.

SCHURB: It all centered in the teaching of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. And that became the hallmark, eventually, of the Augsburg Confession, and the apology of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 and 1531 respectively. Luther didn't personally write the Augsburg Confession, but he had a great deal to do with the production of it.

Even though he wasn't in Augsburg at the time, he was constantly getting pouches carried back and forth with letters from Melancthon and those who were in Augsburg. I mean, Luther, at one point, even said, "The Augsburg Confession is mine." And what do you see in the Augsburg Confession? You see three initial articles on God, sin, and the person and work of Christ flowing up to that article of justification, which is treated in Article 4, and then everything else follows from that. We are justified by grace, through faith; the next article begins, "So that we might receive this faith, and then it goes on to talk about the ministry, to talk about good works, to talk about the church, to talk specifically about baptism, the Lord's Supper, and all sorts of other topics. Luther, whether he was talking about baptism, whether he was talking about vocation, whether he was talking about the Christian life, whether he was responding to his opponents, no matter what he did, that teaching of justification remained central for him. And he said, "As long as this teaching is there, then Christendom remains pure, and then doctrine can remain pure. When you lose that, you lose it all." And he knew that from his own experience.

WILKEN: Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri;

formerly served as a theology professor at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and as an Assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Ken, it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for being our guest.

SCHURB: Always delighted to be with you, Todd, and to start Reformation Week, wow!

WILKEN: *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues tomorrow. We'll talk with Pastor Paul McCain of Concordia Publishing House about the second Martin, Martin Chemnitz. On Wednesday, Johann Gerhardt will be the subject. Dr. Ben Mays will be our guest. Thursday, we'll talk about confessor C.F.W. Walther with Dr. Larry Rast. Friday, confessor Hermann Zasse with Pastor Matt Harrison.

We have a beautiful picture, in this very flawed man's life, of how the Gospel has its way in a person's theology.

Thanks for all the questions and comments. The Gospel moves through a person's life and then, by God's grace through Luther, in the rest of the Church.

I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for listening.

