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## Here We Stand: Luther on Romans

**F**ive hundred years ago this month, Martin Luther, a 33-year-old theology professor, posted his Ninety-Five Theses. And although he was seeking, at first, merely to refute a papal charlatan who was milking his flock by selling indulgences, Luther's act of defiance became the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation—and the world has never been the same since.

Of course, much has changed since that day in 1517. But what has not changed is the Word of God and the truths in the Word that gave Luther the theological foundation to challenge Rome and to deliver to millions the great message of salvation by faith alone.

Central to that foundation is our study for this quarter: the book of Romans. Luther wrote in his *Commentary on Romans*: “The Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul.”—Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, translated by J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1976), p. 8.

Yes, it was in Romans that Luther found the great truth of “justification by faith” alone. It was here that this man, struggling with assurance of salvation, uncovered the great truth—not just of Romans, not just of the New Testament but of the entire Bible: the truth about the plan of salvation, “which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (*2 Tim. 1:9, NKJV*). And this is the truth that salvation is found

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only in the righteousness of Christ. It is a righteousness credited to us by faith, a righteousness granted to us apart from the keeping of the law. Or as Paul so clearly expressed it in Romans: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (*Rom. 3:28, NKJV*).

It was in regard to this truth, too, that Luther—defying the powers and principalities of the world and of the Roman hierarchy—appeared before the Diet of Worms, in 1521, and declared: “I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. . . . Here I stand, I can do no other.”—J. H. Merle D’Aubigné, D.D., *History of the Reformation*, translated by H. White (New York: American Tract Society, 1848), p. 249.

Today faithful Protestants also can do no other than stand on the Word of God over and against all unbiblical traditions and dogma.

There is no question that Christianity has greatly advanced since Luther, freeing itself from centuries of superstition and false doctrine that not only distorted the gospel but, in fact, also usurped it.

Yet, over the long years the Reformation stalled. In some places the progress was replaced by a cold formalism; in others people actually turned back to Rome. And now, in an age of ecumenism and pluralism, many of the distinctive truths that spurred the Reformation have become blurred, covered up under a fusillade of semantic chicanery that seeks to hide fundamental differences that have been resolved no more now than they were in Luther’s day. The prophecies of Daniel 7:23–25; 8:9–12; and Revelation 13, 14, as well as the great news of salvation by faith as found in the book of Romans, show why those faithful to the Bible must firmly adhere to the truths that our Protestant forefathers defended, even at the cost of their lives.

We are Seventh-day Adventists, and we rest upon the principle of *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone; hence, we adamantly reject all attempts to draw Christians back to Rome and to pre-Reformation faith. On the contrary, Scripture points us in the opposite direction (*Rev. 18:4*), and in that direction we proceed as we proclaim “the everlasting gospel” (*Rev. 14:6*) to the world, the same everlasting gospel that inspired Luther 500 years ago.

*It was in Romans  
that Luther found  
the great truth  
of “justification by faith”  
alone.*



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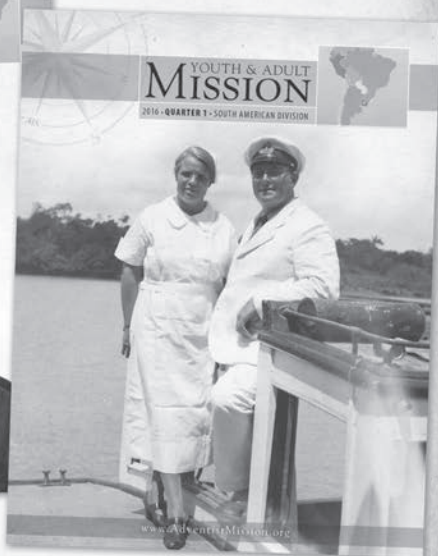
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