

## Vignette 3

### Not for Sale: Forgiveness in Christ Alone

#### Video—Not For Sale

1. When you hear the word *indulgences*, what comes to mind? Give an answer in five words or less.

When you hear the words *Ninety-five Theses*, what comes to mind? Give an answer in five words or less.

2. In the video, what scene caught your attention or what comment was made that you think would be beneficial to remember?

#### Study the Scriptures

3. In the video, Professor James Korthals said that Luther believed that indulgences gave the people the impression “that their sins were forgiven, the slate was wiped clean. When, in fact, nothing could have been further from the truth. They were spending their money for something that was false.” Imagine that you are with Martin Luther and that you need to help the people understand that paying for indulgences won’t buy forgiveness of sins. They need help understanding that doing good works does not make a payment to God and that forgiveness of sins is only through Jesus Christ and him alone. In the following passages, circle important truths you could use and be ready to explain why you circled what you did.
  - A. Galatians 2:16—“A person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”



- B. Galatians 5:4—"You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."
- C. Philippians 3:8,9—"What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith."
- D. Titus 3:4,5—"When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
- E. Acts 13:38,39—"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses."
- F. 2 Corinthians 5:19,21—"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
- G. 1 John 2:1,2—"If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."
- H. Romans 5:1,9—"Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"
4. Having worked with these passages, name at least three blessings that are ours because forgiveness is through Christ alone.

## Listen to Luther

5. Martin Luther knew well the struggles of wanting to be his own savior. He experienced that as a young boy and in the monastery. Even as he grew older, his sinful self still wanted to be the one who would earn God's love without Jesus. Our sinful self is no different. Luther needed the reminder that it is Christ alone who saves; we need that reminder too. Read through the following Luther quotes. Put a star by the one you think gives you the best reminder that we are saved by Christ alone. Be prepared to tell why you starred the one you did.
- A. "You see that the gospel is really not a book of laws and commandments which requires deeds of us, but a book of divine promises in which God promises, offers, and gives us all his possessions and benefits in Christ." (*Luther's Works*, 35:120)
  - B. "Apart from faith all works are dead, no matter how wonderful they look or what splendid names they have." (*Luther's Works*, 44:113)
  - C. "Faith is not enough, but only the faith which hides under the wings of Christ and glories in his righteousness." (*Luther's Works*, 32:235,236)
  - D. "God himself spares the whole human race for the sake of one man, whose name is Jesus Christ; if he were to look at men alone he would have nothing but wrath." (*Luther's Works*, 46:248)
  - E. "No one's faith endures unless he relies upon Christ's own righteousness, and is preserved by his protection. . . . It is something which does not allow itself to be torn away from Christ, and relies only on the One whom it knows is in God's grace. Christ cannot be condemned, nor can anyone who throws himself upon him." (*Luther's Works*, 32:239)
  - F. "Nothing is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures about indulgences. On the contrary, the Scriptures commend faith and are as devoid of references to indulgences as they are full of teaching concerning faith." (*Luther's Works*, 31:276)
  - G. "If the sins of the entire world are on that one man, Jesus Christ, then they are not on the world. But if they are not on him, then they are still on the world. Again, if Christ himself is made guilty of all the sins that we have all committed, then we are absolved from [forgiven of] all sins, not through ourselves or through our own works or merits but through him." (*Luther's Works*, 26:280)
  - H. "No man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly

beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone.” (*Luther’s Works*, 33:62)

- I. “We define a Christian as follows: A Christian is not someone who has no sin or feels no sin; he is someone to whom, because of his faith in Christ, God does not impute his sin.” (*Luther’s Works*, 26:133)

## **Bringing It Home**

6. Today we’ve been reminded of the blessings we have because we are forgiven through Christ alone. Take 90 seconds and write down three of the blessings that stand out for you today.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is one thing you will want to remember or found interesting in today’s study?

## **Living My Faith**

In Thesis 62 (of the Ninety-five Theses), Luther wrote: “The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God” (*Luther’s Works*, 31:31). We treasure the good news that through God’s undeserved gift of his Son, Jesus, sin has been paid for and removed from God’s sight. Praise be to God we are saved by Christ alone. In the next worship service you attend, notice how many times in the liturgy, hymns, readings, and sermon you read or hear the message of forgiveness and salvation through Christ alone. That gospel message is the heart of our worship.

## **Closing Prayer by Martin Luther**

“Almighty God, through the death of your Son you have destroyed sin and death. Through his resurrection you have restored innocence and eternal life. We who are delivered from the power of the devil may live in your kingdom. Give us grace that we may believe this with our whole heart. Enable us, always, to steadfastly praise and thank you in this faith,

through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.” (*Luther’s Prayer’s*, p. 75)

## **Acknowledgments**

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