

Reformation Reflections

JUSTIFICATION



In October of 1529, **Suleiman the Magnificent** of the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Vienna. The invasion ultimately failed but the strength of the Turks and the division and weakness of the Holy Roman Empire became very apparent.

In January of 1530, against this backdrop of war, Emperor Charles V ordered that a diet of the Holy Roman Empire be convened at Augsburg, starting April 8th. He wanted to determine the best course of action against the Turkish invasion and to consider what “might and ought to be done and resolved upon regarding the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion.” In the Emperor’s mind, the theology issues had to be addressed in order to unite the German states against the invading Turks.

Martin Luther was still under the Papal edict and so he did not travel to Augsburg. Instead, he left that to his co-worker, **Philip Melancthon** (among others), remaining nearby in the Coburg castle and in close contact through letters delivered by couriers.



Upon arrival in Augsburg the delegation was given John Eck’s “404 Propositions” in which he had falsely charged the Lutherans with “every conceivable heresy.” The defense that Philip had prepared was no longer adequate to address the charges and was quickly expanded into a full confession of the Christian Faith.

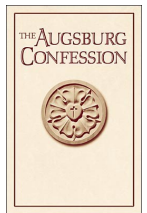


It was originally written for just the delegation from Electoral Saxony, but, after reading it, the princes and leaders of a number of other German territories and free cities clamored to sign it, as well.

On June 25th, 1530, at 3pm, the confession of the Lutherans was presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, in both Latin and in German. It was read in German, in its entirety, loudly and clearly enough that those gathered outside in the courtyard could hear it plainly.

Emperor Charles V was concerned that the Holy Roman Empire would be lost unless the German states united with him against the Turks. The Lutherans, however, were concerned that something much more important would be lost, namely, the Gospel. The truth that we are justified by grace through faith for Christ’s sake could be lost again, all for the sake of expediency.

Thankfully, that did not happen. Instead, the clear confession of Justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone was made in Augsburg by faithful electors, princes, leaders and theologians, and has been made in many countries, cities, pulpits, and homes ever since. By God’s grace the unaltered Augsburg Confession remains our clear confession today.



The heart of that confession, Article IV on Justification, reads as follows:



“Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for

righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4).”

Please consider setting aside time today to read the Augsburg Confession. Our churches and your pastor have subscribed to it **because** it is in accord with the Word of God and your pastor will happily find you a copy to read.

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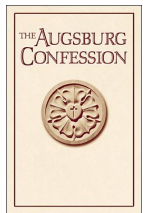


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