

LutherFacts #9

Martin Luther had a way with words, often able to find just the right phrase. One example can be found In 1515 as he began a series of lectures on Paul's Letter to the Romans. He began this effort with the prevailing view that Paul called for Christians to live by the law. In short order, however, as he moved beyond the Latin translation to the original Greek texts, Luther's view shifted dramatically. "Here the door is thrown open wide for the understanding of Holy Scriptures," he declared to his students, "that is, that everything must be understood in relation to Christ ..." Luther concluded Paul's letter was not that we should live "by" but rather "in" the law. In so doing, the law would set us free. God's desire was, he proclaimed, for believers to experience a life of faith, which then led to good works. In advocating justification by faith, Martin Luther laid the basis for a new, radical reading of the Bible, a significant break with existing interpretations. Moreover, the insights he found in Romans would lead him, in time, to call for other doors to be "thrown open wide" in the existing churches of his day.