

Martin Luther



Martin Luther's deep engagement with Scripture caused the Lutheran Reformation. Writing in 1545, a year before his death, Luther recalled how his meditation on Romans 1:17 had affected him. The words of the apostle Paul, "He who through faith is righteous shall live," led Luther to a new understanding of the righteousness or justice of God. Luther remembered that "a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me." He no longer saw God's righteousness as the righteousness by which God judges us but rather as the way God justifies us, that is, puts us in right relationship with God.

Luther then "ran through the Scripture from memory," he later said, and found similar passages about "the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise" In his "Reformation breakthrough" he came to recognize that God acted in the gospel to give away his righteousness. That was profoundly different from God acting in the law to demand righteousness from us. Luther's insight had tremendous implications for how we read the Bible, how we engage with the Bible's message, and how we live as Christians in the world.