

Reformation Lesson
Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____
95 Theses Excerpts

The following are selected theses points from Luther's 95 Theses:

33. Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him;
36. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.
43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons;
47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of pardons is a matter of free will, and not of commandment.
62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.
66. The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.
67. The indulgences which the preachers cry as the "greatest graces" are known to be truly such, in so far as they promote gain.
75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God – this is madness.
76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.

Document Discussion Questions –

1. What does Luther say is the true treasure of the church?
2. What does Luther say about buying pardons (indulgences)?
3. Judging from all of these, what is Luther's opinion on the position of the pope?
4. Rather than buying pardons, people should spend their money on what?
5. Does Luther believe a Christian has to have a pardon to be forgiven? What DOES a Christian need?
6. What can papal pardons do (or not do) according to Martin Luther?
7. After reading all of these do you feel whether the pope had just cause to excommunicate Luther from the church?
8. What does Luther's motivation seem to be after reading excerpts from his controversial text?