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Pastor-Teacher | Chris Regas

Martin Luther: A Reformer Sharing the Light in the Darkness!

Lesson 3

The Story of Martin Luther So Far... A Monk Seeking the Light of Salvation at the End of the Dark Ages – 1483-1517

- A Student Lawyer Encounters Death: “Where will I go when I die?”
- A Serious Monk Searches for Salvation: “What must I do to be saved?”

The most dangerous threat in all of history is a common man or woman with a common Bible committed to an uncommon purpose—the Great Commission!

“What I began as a Doctor, I must truly confess to the end of my life. I cannot keep silent or cease to teach.” ~ Martin Luther

The Rest of the Story... A Reformer Sharing the Light of Salvation at the Dawn of a New Age – 1517-1546

1. Luther **NAILS** it! 1517

He hammers 95 statements for debate (= 95 theses) on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on “All Saints Eve”, October 31!

- Attacked the **ABUSES** of indulgences, not the “**proper**” practice of them...yet!
- “**Penance**” One of the 7 **SACRAMENTS** of the Roman Catholic Church that dealt with confession and satisfaction which was administered by priests.
- “**Indulgences**” Documents prepared by the church to **SELL** to individuals either for themselves or on behalf of the dead.
- “**Total indulgence**” An indulgence that releases a person from purgatory **TOTALLY** but was seldom offered.
- The sale of indulgences was used to finance church projects like the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome!

2. Luther **PUBLISHES** it! 1520

He publishes his convictions with the aid of the new invention of the Gutenberg press!

- “**The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation**”
 - Attacked:** The hierarchy and authority of the Roman Catholic Church
 - Affirmed:** The authority of believer-priests to interpret the Bible and reform the church.
 - Radical Reformation Still Needed:** Gave too much authority to the State over the Church.
- “**The Babylonian Captivity of the Church**”
 - Attacked:** The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, especially the Mass.
 - Affirmed:** The validity of the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper!
 - Radical Reformation Still Needed:** Did not fully embrace believer’s baptism by immersion and view of Lord’s Supper was still in need of reform.

If the papacy did not free churches from these sacramental abuses, then it “is identical with the kingdom of Babylon and the Antichrist itself.” –Luther
“What is asserted without the Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed.” - Luther
- “**On the Freedom of the Christian Man**”
 - Attacked:** The theology of the Roman Catholic Church.



Affirmed: Justification by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers as a result of personal faith in Jesus Christ!

"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." - Luther

Radical Reformation Still Needed: Did not fully apply the idea of Christian freedom to "soul liberty" and the rejection of a state church.

3. Luther STANDS for it! 1521

He refuses to change his beliefs (recant) when summoned by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire to the City of Worms for an Imperial Diet: "Here I stand! I can do no other!"

"Will you defend these books all together, or do you wish to recant some of what you have said?"

"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or plain reason (for I believe in neither pope nor in councils alone, for it is well known, not only that they have erred, but have also contradicted themselves), I am mastered by the passages of Scripture which I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant, for it is neither safe nor honest to violate one's conscience. [I can do no other. Here I take my stand,] God being my helper. Amen." - Luther

*"All that is deformed ought to be reformed. The Word of God alone teaches us what ought to be so, and all reform effected otherwise is vain."
- Francis Lambert*

4. Luther TRANSLATES it! 1522

In an amazing 10 or 11 months he translates the Bible into the German language for the common man!

*"If God had wanted me to die thinking I was a clever fellow, He would not have gotten me into the business of translating the Bible." - Luther
By the end of his life, Martin Luther wrote 60,000 pages, yet he hoped that "all my books would disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone be read."*



5. Luther MARRIES it! 1525

He marries the former nun, Katharina von Bora.

6. Luther SINGS it! 1527?

He writes one of the greatest hymns in all of church history, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."



7. Luther BLOWS it! 1538, 1543

In his later years, he writes some very anti-Jewish material and never completely reforms according to the New Testament.

"The Reformer is always right about what's wrong. However, he's often wrong about what is right." - G. K. Chesterton

Is the Reformation Over?

- No, the **Roman Catholic Church** still teaches what Luther was protesting back in 1517.
- No, many **Protestant churches** and denominations (Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian) stopped short of going all the way to reform according to the New Testament local church.
- No, there are **Baptists and other churches** that practice believer's baptism but still need to realign with Christ's Word and Spirit.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

On his deathbed, Luther was asked: **"Are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in his name?"** He answered **"Yes"**, before taking his final breath. - Michael Reeves



Books for Further Reading:

Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther by Roland H. Bainton
The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World by Stephen J. Nichols
The Legacy of Luther Edited by R. C. Sproul and Stephen J. Nichols
The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation by Michael Reeves
25 Surprising Marriages: How Great Christians Struggled to Make Their Marriages Work by William J. Petersen
Katie Luther, First Lady of the Reformation by Ruth Tucker
Katharina von Bora: A Reformation Life by Rudolph K. Markwald

Movies/DVDs for Viewing:

Luther - 2003 movie with Joseph Fiennes in the starring role is well-made and very good.
Martin Luther - 1953 B&W classic with Niall MacGinnis, nominated for two academy awards but failed to be approved by Quebec's film censorship board, which was made up entirely of French-speaking Catholics since Luther's teachings remained as heretical in 1953 as they were in the 16th Century, and thus was never released in Quebec's movie theaters; it could only be seen there in the basements of Protestant churches.



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