

LESSON 2

Stand Firm: Martin Luther

The Storm Breaks

- As Luther shared his discovery, many of his colleagues and students at Wittenberg were convinced of the validity of his interpretation.
- Luther became convinced that he must challenge the traditional view of achieving salvation and wrote ninety-seven theses to debate the issue academically. However, these theses aroused little interest.
- It was when Luther wrote his ninety-five theses against the sale of indulgences that the greater religious community reacted.
- The Popes response was to ask the Augustinian order to deal with Luther. He was called to the next chapter meeting of the order in Heidelberg.
- Luther went in fear for his life, expecting to be condemned and burned as a heretic. However, many of his contemporaries favored his teachings and some younger ones were even enthusiastic. The Pope then ordered Luther to appear at the Diet of the Empire (the assembly of princes and nobles) scheduled to meet in Augsburg.

Diet of Augsburg

- Luther's ruling prince, Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony secured a safe passage to the Diet. The catholic cardinal at the Diet was not interested in hearing Luther arguments and simply asked him to recant. Luther said he would do this if he could be convinced from Scripture that he was wrong.
- Luther returned to Wittenburg and worked on his three most important treatises. In these essays, his theology redefined the sacraments, the priesthood and most of the practices of the medieval church. Luthers' teachings were published all over Europe and increasing numbers found them to reflect a more biblical understanding of salvation than was presented in the church.
- Pope Leo declared that "a wild boar" had entered the Lord's vineyard and in a papal "bull" he ordered all of Luther's books to be burned and for Luther to submit to Roman authority or be excommunicated and declared anathema.
- When the bull reached Luther he burned it publicly together with other books he declared to be full of "popish doctrines." Luther was again called to appear before another Diet of the Empire to be held at Worms in 1521.

Diet of Worms

- At Worms Luther appeared before the Emperor and other great lords of the German Empire. He was asked if he still held to the doctrines contained in his essays.
- It was a difficult moment for Luther. Not that he feared the imperial powers but his fear was of God. The enormity of opposing the entire church and the empire ordained by God was a dreadful act. He asked for a day's time to answer.
- The next day the hall was filled. Luther was asked once again. "Do you recant, or do you not?" Luther replied, "My conscience is a prisoner of God's Word. I cannot and will not recant, for to disobey one's conscience is neither just nor safe. God help me. Amen." At that he left the hall and returned to his quarters. He was declared a heretic and condemned

The Castle of Wartburg

- Fearing for Luther's life - Frederick the Wise had an armed band abduct Luther on his return to Wittenberg from the Diet. He was captured and taken to a fortified castle at Wartburg. Isolated and in constant danger of his life, Luther's time at the Wartburg castle was extremely difficult.
- However, it was a productive time. He began his translation of the Bible into the German language. Beside adding momentum to the Reformation, Luther's Bible actually shaped the German language and helped unify the people of Germany into a nation.

The Reformation at Wittenberg

- While Luther was confined at Wartburg, his colleagues continued to usher in reforms at Wittenberg. The leader of this group was the Greek professor Philip Melancthon. The mass was simplified and said in German instead of Latin. Monks and nuns left their communities and were married and masses for the dead were abolished.
- In 1522, afraid that the reforms might get out of hand, Luther returned to Wittenberg. Wittenberg soon became the center for the German Reformation. Luther taught and wrote extensively. In 1525, he married Katherine von Bora. His daughter Magdalena died at 13 and Luther was devastated.
- In 1527, after fighting against sickness and intense depression he wrote the famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God." In 1530, he was not allowed to attend the Diet of Augsburg. Philip Melancthon presented to the Emperor a summary of Luthers' beliefs. This became known as the Augsburg Confession.

The Other Side of Luther

- His role in the Peasant's War. After peasant uprising, he sided with the Nobles. Peasants felt betrayed by Luther. "*Against the Murdering and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*"
- His possible recommendation of secret bigamy for Philip Hesse.
- His attitude toward the Jews. "*On the Jews and their lies*"
- His coarseness in language and conduct.

Luther's Death

- Luther remained at Wittenburg which became a center for Reformation teaching. Many students from all over Europe came to learn and returned to their homeland to spread Reformation Doctrine
- On Feb. 18th, 1546, while visiting his home town of Eisleben. Luther was taken ill and died. Philip Melanchthon, took the leadership for the German reformation. He was the exact opposite of Luther in many ways. "The charioteer of Israel has fallen."

Application

- The Gospel brings the freedom to stand right before God without having to earn it by works.
- The Gospel brings the freedom from 'yokes' of contrived spirituality.
- The Gospel brings the freedom to obey God out of love not duty.
 - What is this yoke of slavery - it is whatever you feel you have to do or your depending on in order to stand right before God. Christ has set you free from this - therefore stand firm against the sinful tendency to stand on other things rather than Christ.
 - It cost Jesus Christ his life and so He has said via the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul -I have set you free from having to earn your salvation.
 - Don't let anyone put a yoke back on you - You've been set free. All kinds of Christian sub-culture yokes. Every sub-Christian subculture has them. You must look this way - you got to act this way - you got to worship this way - in order to really be pleasing to God.

