

Lesson C7 – The Reformation.

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. His parents were poor peasants. His father, Hans, worked in the copper mines. Like most parents of the time, they were strict disciplinarians and also raised Martin according to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Like most families in Germany, Luther's family attended church regularly. Their home life, though, did not seem to be overly religious. As was typical, Martin Luther knew about God and the devil, but he saw God only as a judge who would punish him for the bad things he had done and send him to hell if he had sinned too often.

At the age of 5, Martin was already studying Latin in school. He began attending the school of a religious brotherhood in Magedeburg, Germany when he was 13. He was a brilliant student and received his Master of Arts degree from the University of Erfurt in 1505 and began the study of law because Martin's dad wanted him to be a lawyer. It was shortly after this that Martin had a religious experience. During a violent thunderstorm, Martin took shelter under a tree. Then with lightning flashing all around, he fell down in fear and cried, **"Save me, St. Anne, and I'll become a monk"** he cried. It was after this that he joined the monastery of St. Augustinian in Erfurt. He was 21 years old at the time.

In 1507 Luther was ordained and left for the University of Wittenberg to teach moral philosophy. Three years later he journeyed to Rome on business for the Augustinians. While there he was shocked at the spiritual laxity in the Holy City. After returning from Rome, Luther earned his Doctorate of Theology. From 1513 to 1518 he lectured at the University of Wittenberg on Biblical Theology. At this time he began establishing himself and became widely known. In 1515 at the age of 32 Doctor Luther was appointed District Vicar for the Augustinian Order.

Throughout his career, Luther was torn by inner turmoil. He questioned that if man was ruled by sin, how could he hope to gain redemption in the eyes of God? He continually sought peace through *"good works"* -- including fasting and punishing his flesh. His failure to cleanse himself drove him to the edge of despair. Luther's crisis continued until study of the Holy Scriptures brought a new conviction that **salvation is not "earned" by works -- it is a Divine Gift of God**. It is through faith that man receives God's divine gift of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then his sins are forgiven by the sheer mercy of God.

This Doctrine of Justification by Faith soon came to form the basis of Luther's religious thoughts. It was because of this that Luther began to question the Church's practice of Indulgence. According to the church, some people were better than needed in order to be saved. Their *"extra merit"* could be transferred via an indulgence to those whose salvation was in doubt. This was done by making a pilgrimage and paying a small sum. By Luther's time the idea was being abused and indulgences were on public sale. As a parish priest of Wittenberg, Luther protested this situation to the Archbishop of Mainz.

All of these things led to Luther writing his 95 Thesis and nailing them to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. There were three basic ideas: protest against the abuse of papal authority; challenge to the Pope; and denial of the *"extra merit"* theory behind indulgences. Most of the Thesis were not opposed to traditional Roman Catholic doctrine. The Church ordered Luther to appear in Rome to answer charges of heresy. Prince Elector Fredrick the Wise of Saxony, intervened and the Imperial Diet (**hearing**) was held in Augsburg, Germany, in October 1518. Luther refused to recant.

Reform issues spread and the Pope issued a Bull (**Papal Order**) threatening Luther with excommunication. At the age of 38 Luther publicly burned the Bull and was excommunicated in January 1521. In April 1521 Luther, *the reformer*, appeared before the Imperial Diet at Worms. There Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, proclaimed Luther a heretic and put him under the Ban of the Empire and all of his works were banned.

After being declared a heretic and banned by the Diet of Worms, Luther was given asylum by Prince Frederick and spent a year at Wartburg Castle under Prince Frederick's care. While here he translated the Bible into German. He did this to make the Bible available to all people. During his absence from Wittenberg, the reform movement was progressing but becoming very disorderly and church property was being destroyed. The town council asked Luther to return and speak to the people. At great risk to his life he did this and pleaded with the reformers not to use violence, fearing the reform might lead to revolution. However, many German peasants, long being oppressed, felt the time had come to revolt. Luther called for swift suppression of the rebellious peasants. He lost the support among many radical reformers.

Luther remained in Wittenberg where he wrote, taught and preached for the next 20 years. It was also here that in June 1525 at the age of 42 he married Katharina von Bora, a former nun, whom he had sheltered at one time in Wittenberg. Theirs was a happy marriage. They had six children of their own and gave a home to eleven orphans.

During his later years Luther managed to remain very prolific. Despite the Ban of Church and Empire, he continued on with his work. During his lifetime he published almost 400 works which included Biblical commentaries, catechisms, sermons and tracts. He also worked on revisions of his translation of the Bible. Luther was said to have an excellent singing voice and loved to sing his own hymns. He helped people take part in church by writing hymns, both words and music.

In 1546 Luther was asked to arbitrate a dispute in Eisleben. He traveled to the town of his birth and at the age of 63 died of a stroke. His body was interred in the Castle Church in Wittenberg, where he had posted his 95 Thesis almost 30 years before.

Of all the things Luther wrote about, his Reforms had the most impact. Some of the more important ones are the following. In Luther's "**Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation**" he urged the state to undertake reforms which the Church had neglected. The papacy should be a spiritual institution allowing finances to be handled by national churches.

In "**The Babylonian Captivity**" tract Luther reduced the number of Sacraments to two -- Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He wrote these Sacraments, had visible signs of outward grace and were instituted by Christ Himself. It was Luther's intention to bring the whole congregation into the worship service. In 1526 he produced a vernacular liturgy, the German Mass. He also insisted that the laity be offered the wine as well as the bread in Holy Communion. It was his belief that the Word of God, received in faith and revealed as the Holy Gospel, was the true path to salvation. The Scriptures are the supreme authority in matters of faith and life. Luther taught that the individual conscience is answerable only to the Word of God. Christ alone is the intermediary between man and his Creator. Through baptism we are all members of the priesthood of believers.

Luther encouraged his close friend and colleague, Philip Melanchthon, to write the Augsburg Confession. Those doctrines expressed in 1530 are still basic to the Lutheran Church. Melanchthon claimed that Lutherans remained faithful to the true teachings of the Christian Church.

Martin Luther lived what he believed and became a turning point in history. He left behind a rich legacy of doctrines, literature and ethics. Above all he taught people to be faithful to God.

Martin Luther

Brief Review

- November 10, 1483 Born in Eisleben
 - 1505 Monk in Erfurt
 - 1512 Doctor of Theology in Wittenberg
 - 1517 The 95 Theses nailed to the Door of the Castle Church
 - 1520 Luther burns the papal bull of excommunication
 - 1521 At the Imperial Diet of Worms, Luther refuses to recant
 - 1521 While in hiding at the Wartburg, Eisenach, Luther translated the New Testament into German
 - 1525 Luther is married to Katharina von Bora
 - 1529 "The Small Catechism"
 - 1534 The Publication of the first Wittenberg Bible, Old and New Testaments, in Martin Luther's German translation
 - Feb. 18, 1546 Luther dies in Eisleben and is laid to rest in the Castle Church in Wittenberg
-

1. Why did Martin Luther enter the monastery to become a monk?
2. What did Martin Luther think was wrong with indulgences?
3. Martin Luther is known for making God's Word available for the common person. How did he do this?
4. What are some of the ways that Martin Luther tried to earn forgiveness of sins?
5. What was the Diet of Worms?
6. What year did Luther nail the 95 Theses on the church door?
7. Martin Luther is known for his statement pointing to three things that stand for everything that was being taught during the Reformation. What are they?

_____ alone

_____ alone

_____ alone

Story of Martin Luther

What are four things that were wrong with the church in Martin Luther's Day?

- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
1. T F Martin Luther was the first Christian to try to reform the church.
 2. T F Martin Luther was born in Switzerland.
 3. T F When Martin Luther learned about Jesus as a child , he knew Jesus as a judge.
 4. T F Martin Luther was very religious and very conscious of his sinfulness.
 5. T F Martin Luther decided to enter the monastery because he knew there was a shortage of monks.
 6. T F Martin Luther's dad was overjoyed to have a son enter into God's work.
 7. T F In order to try and feel good about his relationship with God, Luther would often fast and spent long hours praying.
 8. T F While he prayed and fasted, Martin Luther felt closer to God and a real sense of peace.
 9. T F The first time that Luther was able to read a Bible is when he was 20 years old.
 10. T F At the monastery, for the first time Luther encounter Jesus as Savior.
 11. T F Martin Luther was a good theologian, but a lousy preacher.
 12. T F Luther became a theologian teaching the Old and New Testament in Wittenberg.
 13. T F Pope Leo X needed money to build St. Peter's Basilica, so he sent monks around Germany to raise money by selling indulgences.
 14. T F An indulgence is a slip of paper that a person could buy for the forgiveness of sins.
 15. T F The reason Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses was to debate the meaning of life.
 16. T F Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the church door because that was the town bulletin board.
 17. T F At the Diet of Worms, Luther didn't eat anything but worms.
 18. T F Martin Luther was known for his three great principles: Sola fide, Sola gratia, and Sola Scriptura which mean fidelity alone, grace alone, and Scripture alone.
 19. T F One of Martin Luther's greatest gift to the church was translating the Bible into the German language which made the Bible accessible to the common people.