

# Martin Luther

**Leader of the Reformation**

Part 2



**LIGHTERS OF THE REFORMATION**

Book 4



In our last book we learned about Martin Luther. We saw how he learned the truth of salvation and how he was called before the trial at Augsburg to answer for his faith. Now we will go on with the story of Luther and see more of how God used him to bring the people out of spiritual darkness into the light of truth.

There was now a new emperor. A young man named Charles V was now sitting on the throne. The pope sent



*Charles V*

representatives to meet him. They asked Charles to get rid of Luther and the Reformation. Charles was in a hard place. Frederick the ruler of Saxony had helped Charles to become emperor. And Frederick was a friend

of the Reformation. Frederick said Luther should be allowed to give his message to judges who would judge him fairly. Until it could be proven that Luther was wrong, nothing should be done against him or the Reformation.

An important meeting was to be held at a German city called Worms. Many leaders from all over the empire would be there. For the first time they would meet with Charles. There were many important things that needed to be talked about. But most of all now they would talk about Luther and what should be done to the Reformation.



*Frederick of Saxony*

Charles had told Frederick to bring Luther with him to Worms. He promised Luther would be kept safe. He also promised that Luther would be allowed to tell

what he taught. Luther wanted the emperor to hear the message of truth and even though he was sick at the time, he decided to go to Worms.

But Aleander, who was the representative of the pope, did not want Luther to come to Worms. The pope had already said Luther was wrong and had cut him off from the church. So if Luther was given a trial now, it would mean the pope was not in charge. Plus Aleander was afraid that if Luther was allowed to speak, many of the princes might decide his message was truth and join the Reformation. So Aleander tried to lead Charles to decide that Luther should not come. At last Charles wrote Frederick and said that, unless Luther would give up the truth, he should not come to Worms.

But Aleander was not content with this. He tried his best to convince the leaders at Worms that Luther was very evil. But as he spoke against Luther his words and actions were so full of hate that the leaders could see he was not being a Christian. After Aleander spoke most of the leaders were even more likely to think Luther and the Reformation were good.

Aleander tried to get Charles to follow the pope's laws condemning Luther. But the laws of Germany said that Charles couldn't do this unless the princes agreed to it. So Charles told Aleander he needed to talk to the whole council of leaders. So Aleander did just that.

Aleander was very good at talking. He came up with many reasons telling why he thought Luther was bad. He then said the Reformation was made

of many foolish, poor, and evil people. He said the Catholic Church was much better and he asked the council to take a strong stand against the Reformation.

Aleander's words had an influence on the princes. Many of them wanted to obey the pope and get rid of Luther. Luther was not there to defend the truth and so only the error of Aleander's words had been spoken. It almost looked like the Reformation would be ended. But God was still at work. He wanted the people to have light. And nothing was going to stop God from giving that light to the people.

One of the princes was Duke George of Saxony. He was an enemy of Luther. But Duke George stood up



*Duke Georae*

and showed that the Catholic Church was not as good as Aleander had tried to make it look. He began to speak about the bad things that were in the church and how the Catholic leaders only wanted money. They did not preach the truth, but lies, because that is how they could get more money. Duke George said there must be a change in the church. There must be a reformation.

The council agreed with Duke George. There were many things that must change in the church. They chose a group of men to prepare a list of the problems in the church that were hurting the German people. 101 things were put on the list. It was then given to Charles and he was told that these things must be changed.

Since Luther was also calling for changes in the church, the council now

wanted to hear his message. Luther was told he should come to Worms. Charles promised him he would be kept safe until he could return to Wittenberg.

Luther's friends were afraid to have him go to Worms. They knew how much he was hated by the Roman Catholic Church. They were afraid that Charles's promise would be broken and Luther would be killed. But Luther did not mind if he was killed. He just wanted God's truth to win over the lies of Satan. He got ready to go to Worms to defend the truth.

Three friends were to go with Luther. Melancthon also wanted to go, but Luther told him to stay. If Luther was killed, the Reformation must still go on, and Melancthon must lead it. Many people gathered around to tell Luther goodbye as he left Wittenberg.



Their lives had been changed by the gospel and with many tears they told Luther goodbye. They wondered if they would ever see him again.

Luther and his friends left Wittenberg. As they traveled through the towns on the way to Worms, many people warned Luther that if he should go on he would be killed. Then one day Luther heard that his writings had already been outlawed by the council at Worms. It was very dangerous to keep going to Worms, but Luther kept going. He was not afraid.

At the town of Erfurt, Luther was asked to preach. This he gladly did. Here he was able to share the gospel with the people. The people had seen him years before as a monk begging from door to door. Now they saw him preach the truth of Jesus.

As he kept going to Worms, more and more people warned him about the dangers. "You will be burned alive," some people said. Luther answered them, "If they should make a fire all the way from Worms to Wittenberg and the flames should rise up to heaven, I would go through it in the name of the Lord."

As he came closer to the city of Worms the people in the city became very excited. Luther's friends were afraid for his safety and his enemies were afraid that if he spoke to the council the truth would win over their errors. Many people tried to keep him from entering into Worms. But Luther kept coming. When he arrived, a great crowd of people greeted him at the city gates. His enemies had not believed he would come. Now they did not know what to do. A priest told the emperor he should break his promise

and kill Luther. But Charles did not want to break his promise. So Luther was told he must come before the council on the next day.

However, Luther only was able to rest for a few hours to prepare for the next day. Lots of people came to see him. Friends, as well as enemies, came to look at him. But he treated all of them kindly.

The next day Luther came before the council. He had to stand right in front of the emperor's throne. An officer stood up and pointed to a stack of papers and books on a table. The officer told Luther to answer two questions. Had he written these papers and books? And would he say they were false and he no longer agreed with them?

The titles of the papers and books were read and Luther agreed they were his writings. But he did not answer the second question. Instead, he politely asked that he be given time to think about it. He wanted to be sure he gave the right answer. The emperor agreed and he was told he could answer on the next day.

This decision was a wise one. The men of the council saw that Luther made decisions carefully. And it also gave Luther a chance to prepare a good answer.

Later when Luther was alone he thought of how many enemies of the truth there were, and how he was only one man. As he thought about this, his faith became weak. It looked to him that the battle was about to be lost. He was afraid that he might say the wrong thing, and because of his wrong



words the leaders would reject the truth of God. He wanted to know that God would go with him. He was not afraid to die. But he was afraid that the truth might be rejected. Throwing himself on the ground, he prayed asking God for help. He knew he couldn't do the work alone, and needed God's help. He prayed long and hard, and God answered his prayer. He felt God's peace, and he knew that God would go with him.

The next day, the 18<sup>th</sup> of April in the year 1521, Luther came again before the council. He was calm and peaceful. In a soft, humble voice Luther made his answer.

He said that all of the things he had written were not the same. Some were written about faith and good works. Even his enemies said these were good for the people. If he were to take back these writings it would be to take back truths which everyone agreed on. Other things he had written were exposing bad things the church and the pope were doing. To take back these would mean he was supporting these bad things. In the



third group of books he had attacked people for the evil things they did. In

these books, Luther said, he might not have been as loving as he should have been toward the people. But still if he should take these back it would make the people bolder in their evil.

He then asked the emperor, the princes, and all the men there to prove from the Bible that he was wrong. He said, "As soon as I am shown this, I will take back every error, and be the first to lay hold of my books and throw them into the fire."

Luther had spoken in the German language, now they asked him to say the same things in the Latin language. Even though he was tired, he said again everything in Latin. God was working through this. Many of the princes had not understood everything clearly when he said it the first time. But now that he said it again, they understood clearly what he was saying.

But there were those who were stubborn. They refused to see the truth and refused to accept it. The officer rose up angrily and told Luther "You have not answered the question. Will you, or will you not, take back your writings and say they are false?"

Luther replied "I cannot give up my faith either to the pope or to the councils." Unless they would show him where he was wrong according to the Bible he said, "I cannot and I will not take back what I have written. It is not safe for a Christian go against his conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen."

Luther stood alone on the Word of God, and unless he could be shown from the Bible that he was wrong, he would not be moved. For a time everyone was quiet. Even the emperor



thought Luther's words were very powerful.

Luther was then asked to leave while the princes and emperor consulted together of what to do with Luther. They called him back a little later, giving him one more chance to say his writings were false. But Luther would not. The papal representatives were surprised and angry. Kings were afraid of the pope's power but this humble monk was not afraid.

But Luther's enemies did talk the emperor into staying on the pope's side. The next day, Charles told the council that since his fathers had protected the pope and the Catholic religion, he would do the same. He promised to destroy the Reformation and its followers. However, he would not break the promise of safety he had made to Luther and said that Luther

should get back safely to Wittenberg before anything was done against him.

The council was divided. Some said that if the promise of safety was made to someone who they believed was teaching error, that promise should not be kept. They said Luther should be burnt at the stake like Huss. But the princes of Germany, even the ones who were enemies of Luther, did not think that it was good to break a promise. The emperor also believed he should keep his promise.

However, as the council discussed what to do with Luther, rumors spread through the people that Luther would be killed. Luther had many friends, some were even powerful leaders. Hundreds of people promised to protect him. The council knew that if it broke the promise of safety and hurt

Luther the people would rise up against them and the emperor.

More efforts were made to get Luther to give up the truth. But his answer was always, "No." He would not give up what he believed and taught unless it could be shown he was wrong according to the Bible. But they could not give him any proof from the Bible that he was wrong. At last everyone knew that there was no chance of Luther taking back what he had written.

Luther was then commanded to return home by the emperor. He left Worms knowing that soon, they would try to get rid of him. But Luther was happy that the light of truth was winning over the darkness of error.

Not long after he left Worms, the emperor sent out a ban of Luther.

Charles commanded that as soon as the promise of safety ended, Luther's work should be stopped. No one should help him by giving him a place to stay, food, water or anything else he needed. Wherever he was, he was to be arrested. His followers also were to be thrown in jail and their property taken away. Luther's writings were to be destroyed. And if anyone disobeyed this command they were also to be punished.

But God was protecting Luther. As he was traveling to Wittenberg, some men on horses rode up. They had masks hiding their faces. Grabbing Luther and taking him away from his friends, they rode off with him. He was quickly taken to a castle hidden deep in the woods. The castle was called Wartburg Castle.



Luther was not taken away by his enemies. It was a few friends who took him and hid him at Wartburg. Frederick of Saxony had decided to protect Luther and had formed the



*Wartburg Castle*

plan. But the plan was a secret and even Frederick did not know where Luther was taken.

Luther's enemies were happy when he was taken away. His friends were sad. Most people thought he was dead. But then new writings he had written kept being printed. For almost a whole year he taught the gospel by writing from his hiding place at Wartburg Castle.

While at Wartburg, Luther also translated the New Testament into the

German language. So while he was hidden away from his enemies, he gave to the German people the greatest gift they could ever have.

But God had another reason in hiding Luther at Wartburg. Luther had become very popular and God did not want Luther to become proud and trust in himself. And so to keep Luther from becoming prideful, God needed to put him somewhere else for a time.

The battle between truth and error is still going on today. Like Martin Luther, we need to make sure that what we believe is in the Bible. And we should not ever give up what the Bible teaches.

In the next book we will finish with the story of Luther and see what happened to him.



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