

# The Reformation Week 1 - Early History

## ☐ Monday - Morning Star of the Reformation: John Wycliffe.

English reformer John Wycliffe (1320-1384) taught that the Bible, not the Church, is the supreme source of religious authority. Back then, the church restricted use of the Bible to clergy, but Wycliffe believed that every Christian should have access to Scripture in his own language, and so Wycliffe translated the Latin Vulgate into Middle English. For this, Wycliffe was excommunicated and His writings burned. Dear Christian, the reformers sacrificed everything to put the Word of God into the hands of God's people. Read it, study it, cherish it! Read 2 Timothy 2:15

## ☐ Tuesday - Through the Law Comes the Knowledge of Sin.

Before entering St. Augustine's Monastery in Erfurt, Germany, Luther had pursued a degree in law at the University of Erfurt. But his study of the law only increased Luther's sense of his own sinfulness. As a result, Luther lived with an overwhelming fear of God's judgment. Luther was once asked, "Brother Martin do you love God?" Luther replied, "Sometimes I hate Him. ... Christ seems to me nothing more than an angry judge who comes to me with a sword in His hand." 250 years later, John Newton would write, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved" (*Amazing Grace*, 1772). Read Romans 1:18, 3:20, 3:23, 6:23

## ☐ Wednesday - Christ's Imputed Righteousness.

In 1502, Frederick the Wise founded the University of Wittenberg, Germany and in 1508, Johann Staupitz, first dean of the university and head of the Augustinian monastery, sent for Martin Luther to teach biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg. While studying Romans in the upper room in the tower of the Black Cloister in Wittenberg, Luther realized that believers are declared righteous by their reception of a righteousness outside of themselves. This "alien righteousness", as Luther called it, belongs to Christ. Luther wrote, "All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light." Read Romans 4:5, 5:19; Philippians 3:7-9

## ☐ Thursday - The Redemption Price for Your Sin.

In Catholic theology, an "indulgence" is an amount of money paid to the church as "a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). In Luther's day, professional "pardoners" were sent out to sell papal indulgences, in order to fund expensive projects like St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome as well as the crusades. One such pardoner was a Dominican monk named Johannes Tetzel who oversaw the distribution and marketing of indulgences in Germany. With great pageantry and fanfare, Tetzel announced, "Every time a coin in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs." In response, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg chapel protesting the church's sale of indulgences. Christian, no amount of money can redeem you from your sins. No, rather, you are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ: an offering of infinite value to pay for an eternal debt. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19

## ☐ Saturday - My Conscience is Captive to the Word of God.

Martin Luther appeared before the Imperial Diet in Wörms, Germany, on April 17, 1521. In attendance was 21 year old Emperor of the "Holy" Roman Empire, Charles V, and a room full of princes, nobles, and papal legates. Told to recant of his writings, Luther declared, "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture (for I trust neither pope nor council, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves), my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor right. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me." Read Psalm 119:160; 1 Thessalonians 2:13