

**Revelation 16: 3 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 34: 29-33; “Martin Luther Takes His Stand”,  
Sermon # 119 in the series – “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016,  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Having read this text to you, you can see how this man Josiah, who was king over Judah and Jerusalem, brought reformation to the worship and practice of the people of God in that day, in the Old Testament. And in my last sermon to you from this text in Revelation 16: 3, I explained to you, how it was, that one man, Martin Luther, was converted and brought out of Roman Catholic darkness and transformed to become God’s Reformer. I was saying to you that it was he, along with a whole set of men, some of whom came before him and some after, who poured out the second bowl of wrath on the false Antichristian system of Rome. It began with his finding the Bible and through his finding that, He found Christ, by the exercise of his faith.

But once he had found the Bible, and found Christ through the truth of the Bible, he began to see many more things clearly in terms of how men should live, and how they should worship God. There are several things in the passage that I just read to you about Josiah, that remind me of Martin Luther, and so this afternoon I want to be able to show you the similarities, and to open up to you a few of the things that Luther did in his day, that are pertinent to our day. Certain phrases should stick in our minds when we think of both men. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – In verse 30 – The king went up to the house of the Lord. 2<sup>nd</sup>, in verse 31 – Then the king stood in his place, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, in verse 32 – He made all who were present in Jerusalem... take a stand.” It is the truth of these phrases that will show us how Martin Luther made progress in bringing reformation in his day, and it will help us to understand how we can see progress in the reformation of our churches, in our day.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Martin Luther, like Josiah, went up to the house of the Lord.**

It says that Josiah went up, “with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem – the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord.” This reminds me very much of Luther at the Diet of Worms. But before I relate to you what happened there, I must briefly tell you about the events that led up to that great convocation of learned men and rulers of kingdoms. In 1516, Luther was a very busy man. He wrote to a friend, “I could use two secretaries. I do almost nothing during the day but write letters. I am a conventual preacher, reader at meals, parochial preacher, director of studies, overseer of eleven monasteries, superintendent of the fish pond at Litzkau, referee of the squabble at Torgau, lecturer on Paul, collector of material for a commentary on the Psalms, and then, as I said, I am overwhelmed with letters. I rarely have full time for the canonical hours (the time set apart for prayer and devotions), and for saying mass, not to mention my own temptations with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. You see how lazy I am.” (end of quote) But it was out of just such labors such as this that his activities as a Reformer arose.”

Martin Luther got into great trouble with the Roman Catholic church and its hierarchy because he was concerned for the church, the house, the temple of the living God. He was a man concerned about the salvation of people under his charge as a priest. As he read the Scriptures, he came to see the practice of selling indulgences was deceiving people into thinking that they could buy their relatives out of purgatory and this would allow them to enter heaven. He began to see clearly that people were losing their souls and perishing by believing that buying indulgences would bring them, and even their dead relatives, merit toward eternal life, and pardon for some sins. Listen to how Tetzl, the Dominican monk and vendor of indulgences used to address his audience. “Listen now, God and St. Peter call you. Consider the salvation of your souls and those of your loved ones departed. You priest, you noble, you merchant, you

virgin, you matron, you youth, you old man, enter now into your church, which is the Church of St. Peter. Visit the most holy cross erected before you and ever imploring you. Have you considered that you are lashed in a furious tempest amid the temptations and danger of the world, and that you do not know whether you can reach the haven, not of your mortal body, but of your immortal soul? Consider, that all who are contrite, and have confessed, and made contribution will receive complete remission of all their sins. Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends, beseeching you and saying, "Pity us, pity us". We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance. Do you not wish to? Open your ears. Hear the father saying to his son, the mother to her daughter, "We bore you, nourished you, brought you up, left you our fortunes, and you are so cruel and hard, that now you are not willing for so little to set us free? Will you let us lie here in these flames? Will you delay our promised glory? Remember that you are able to release them, for – ***As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.***"

Now, when Luther heard of such things, he began to preach against this indulgence trafficking. In one sermon he says this, "No one can prove by Scripture, that the righteousness of God requires a penalty or satisfaction from the sinner. The only duty it imposes is a true repentance, a sincere conversion, a resolution to bear the cross of Christ, and to perform good works. It is a great error to pretend of oneself to make satisfaction for our sins to God's righteousness; God pardons them gratuitously (freely) by his inestimable grace." He says, "But you say, shall we then never purchase any?.....I have already told you, and I repeat it, my advice is that no one should buy them. Leave them for drowsy Christians: But you should walk apart and for yourselves! We must turn the faithful aside from indulgences, and exhort them to the works which they neglect." And finally, glancing at his adversaries, Luther concluded in these words: "And should any cry out that I am a heretic (for the truth that I preach is very prejudicial to their strong box), I care but little for their clamors. They are gloomy and sick brains, men who have never tasted the Bible, never read the Christian doctrine. May God grant both them and us a sound understanding!" (End of quote)

It is said that after these words that Luther quitted the pulpit, leaving his hearers in great emotion, at such daring language. This sermon was printed and it made a profound impression on all who read it. Luther was a man of the church; he never intended to leave the Roman Catholic church if he could convince others of their errors and lead them back to the truth. But he knew that he had to take a stand, to deal with this.

**And this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that is pertinent to our day from his life: He stood in His place.**

Even as Josiah stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform what was written in God's book; even so, did Luther.

One day Luther was seated in the confessional at Wittenberg. Many of the towns-people came successively, and confessed themselves guilty of great excesses. Adultery, licentiousness, usury, ill-gotten gains, and other sins such as this. He reprimands, corrects, and instructs. But what is his astonishment when these individuals reply that they will not abandon their sins?..... Greatly shocked, he declares that since they will not promise to change their lives, he cannot absolve them. The unhappy creatures then appeal to their letters of indulgence; they show them, and maintain their virtue. But Luther replies that he has nothing to do with these papers, and adds: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." They cry out and protest; but the doctor is immovable. They must cease to do evil, and learn to do well, or else there is no absolution. He says to them, "Have a care how you listen to the clamors of these indulgence-merchants: you have better things to do than buy these licenses which they sell at so vile a price." The inhabitants of Wittenberg, in great alarm, hastily returned to Tetzels: they told him

that an Augustinian monk had treated his letters with contempt. He becomes very angry. He storms from the pulpit using insults and curses; and to strike the people with greater terror, he lit a fire, in several places in the market place, declaring that he had received an order from the pope to burn all heretics who presumed to oppose his most holy indulgences. But Luther stood his ground because he loved the pure word of God. He took his stand because he didn't want to see people perish.

### **3. But then 3<sup>rd</sup> – Martin Luther also made others take a stand.**

Quoting from Merle D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation – "The festival of All-Saints was a very important day for Wittenberg, and above all, for the church which the elector had built there, and which he had filled with relics. On that day the priests used to bring out these relics, ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones, and exhibit them before the people who were astonished and dazzled at such magnificence. Whoever visited the church obtained a rich indulgence. Accordingly on this anniversary, pilgrims came to Wittenberg in crowds. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October at noon on the day preceding the festival, Luther, who had already made up his mind, walks boldly towards the church, to which a superstitious crowd of pilgrims was repairing, and posts upon the door ninety-five theses or propositions against the doctrine of indulgences. Let me give you a taste of them. #1 – When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says repent, he means that the whole life of believer upon earth should be a constant and perpetual repentance. #21 – The commissaries of indulgences are in error when they say, that by the papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment. #37 – Every true Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ or of the Church, by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence. #53 – They are enemies of the pope and of Jesus Christ, who by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the Word of God. #62 – The true and precious treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God. This is a sample of what Luther nailed to the door of Wittenberg chapel that day. Reformation we should understand, is always negative and positive. It is negative in that it brings down the strongholds of falsehood and error, and it is positive in that it seeks to repair and build and promote true worship and service of the one true and living God.

Luther would have much work to do after this in confronting numerous illustrious and educated men and princes. But none so great as his appearance at the Diet of Worms. Presided over by the Emperor Charles, there had never been so many princes meeting together in one place. Electors, dukes, archbishops, landgraves, margraves, counts, bishops, barons, and lords of the empire. The major purpose of their gathering was to decide on Luther and the Reformation. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1521, Luther entered the city of Worms. Two thousand people accompanied him through the streets of the city. The citizens eagerly pressed forward to see him: every moment the crowd was increasing. It was much greater than at the public entry of the emperor. He was perceived by some a prodigy of wisdom, and to others he was a monster of iniquity. On the next day he was summoned before the most august assembly in the world. The chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves, John Eck said first in Latin and then in German, "Martin Luther! His sacred and invincible imperial majesty has cited you before his throne, in accordance with the advice and counsel of the states of the holy Roman Empire, to require you to answer two questions: First, do you acknowledge these books to have been written by you? (He pointed at about 20 volumes placed on a table in the middle of the hall., directly in front of Luther.)

And, secondly, are you prepared to retract these books, and their contents, or do you persist in the opinions you have advanced in them? At this time, he answered the first question, "Yes, I acknowledge as mine the books that have just been named: I cannot deny them." "As to the second, seeing that it is a question which concerns faith and the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God, the greatest and most precious treasure either in heaven or earth, is interested,

I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection.” “I might affirm less than the circumstance demands, or more than truth requires, and so I entreat you imperial majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, that I may answer with offending against the Word of God.” This time, they granted him.

The next day, the 18th of April, it seemed to him that God had hidden His face from him. His faith grew weak; his enemies multiplied before him; his imagination was overwhelmed at the sight.....His soul was as a ship tossed by a violent tempest, which reels and sinks to the bottom of the abyss, then mounts up again to heaven. It was to him as a little garden of Gethsemane. He prays, “O Almighty and Everlasting God! How terrible is this world! behold, it openeth its mouth to swallow me up, and I have so little trust in Thee! How weak is the flesh and how powerful is Satan! If it is in the strength of this world only that I must put my trust, all is over!.....My last hour is come, my condemnation has been pronounced!.....O God! O God! O God! Do thou help me against all the wisdom of the world! Do this; thou shouldst do this .....thou alone.....for this is not my work, but Thine. I have nothing to do here, nothing to contend for with these great ones of the world! I should desire to see my days flow on peaceful and happy. But the cause is Thine.....and it is a righteous and eternal cause O Lord! help me! Faithful and unchangeable God! In no man do I place my trust. It would be vain! All that is of man is uncertain; all that cometh of man fails.....O God! My God, hearest Thou me not?....My God, art Thou dead?....No! Thou canst not die! Thou hidest thyself only! Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it well! Act then, O God....stand at my side, for the sake of the well beloved Jesus Christ who is my defense my shield, and my strong tower.” After a moment of silent struggle he thus continues, “Lord! where stayest Thou? Come! come! I am ready....I am ready to lay down my life for Thy truth.....patient as a lamb. For it is the cause of justice-it is Thine.....I will never separate myself from Thee, neither now nor through eternity!.....And though the world should be filled with Devils, though my body, which is still the work of They hands, should be slain, be stretched upon the pavement, be cut in pieces....reduced to ashes....my soul is Thine! Yes! I have assurance of Thy Word. My soul belongs to Thee! It shall abide forever with Thee.....Amen!.....O God! help me!.....Amen!” This prayer explains Luther and the Reformation.

When he was brought before the diet at 4:00 that afternoon, the Chancellor of Treves said indignantly, “Will you or will you not, retract?” Upon this Luther replied without hesitation: “Since you ask from me a clear, simple and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning- unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. And then looking around on this assembly before which he stood, and which held his life in its hands, he said: “Here I am I can do no other; may God help me!” Amen!

This saying is what has caused countless thousands of people to rally around. Our conscience can only be taken captive by the Word of God. This was a pouring out of the second bowl of wrath as it affects both authority in Church and State. It was the beginning of the destruction of the whole false system of Roman Catholicism. Men cannot dictate or lord it over our faith. We have received it from God Himself in his word. But we can by God’s grace follow in the steps of the great reformer and in taking our stand for the truth of God’s Word, make others to take a stand with us. I think that is what happens when we are filled with Christ’s spirit, we become fervent for truth. Let us remember what has been given us in the Reformation; these blessed truths which lead to our taking our stand for Christ.