

Martin Luther

“Unless I am proved wrong by the testimony of Scripture or by evident reason, I am bound in conscience and held fast to the Word of God. Therefore I cannot and will not retract anything, for it is neither safe nor salutary to act against one’s conscience” (Peters, 26). This statement, given by Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521 in defense of his 95 Theses, demonstrates the determination Luther displayed in the face of great opposition throughout his life. He went against his father, the Emperor of Germany, and even one of the most powerful organizations of his time, the Catholic Church, to stand beside his beliefs and the beliefs of numerous others.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany on Nov. 10, 1483. His father had great dreams for his son to become a lawyer, and that became Luther’s goal, too, until July 2, 1505. While traveling back to the University of Erfurt after visiting his home, Luther was caught in a storm and in a flash of terror vowed that he would become a monk if his life was spared. Two weeks later he fulfilled that promise and joined the Augustinian monks in Erfurt.

In 1512, Luther received his doctorate in theology and was appointed professor of theology at Wittenberg University as well as priest for the city church. It was there, in 1517, that Luther composed and posted his famous 95 Theses against the Catholic Church’s practice of selling indulgences. By 1521 a papal bull was issued against Luther, and he was summoned to the Imperial Diet at Worms. Although he was ordered to renounce his beliefs by men of high authority, he refused to comply. The attacks against him became fierce enough to force Luther into hiding in the castle at Wartburg for several months.

Upon returning to Wittenberg in 1522, Luther published several of his greatest writings including a new German translation of the *Bible*, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *Of the Liberty of a Christian Man*. In 1525 he married Katherine von Bora, a nun who had left her convent. She became a great support for him throughout the rest of his life as he continued to fight for the Reformation. On his way back from settling a dispute between the Mansfeld Counts in 1546, Martin Luther died in the town of his birth. He had fought against great opposition and lived to see the Reformation take a firm hold in Europe.

References

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