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# Protestant Reformation

## Part 2: Luther's Courage

As Narrated by Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

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Martin Luther displayed his extraordinary courage when he publicly criticized the Catholic Church. Shortly before his courageous act, Catholic critics had been burned at the stake in Czechoslovakia and in Florence. When Martin Luther decided to openly criticize the church, his decision put his life at risk.

This extraordinary courage was a strength shared by the other Protestant Reformation fathers. They opposed a monolithic political, economic, religious, even military power regarded by the European continent as the moral guide God had provided. When they opposed it, they confronted the entire culture of their day.

In Martin Luther's case, his courage came from his conviction that his cause was godly and right. Although the Catholic hierarchy both in Germany and in Rome may have been cynical and hedonistic, Martin Luther was devoted, sincere and self-disciplined as a committed believer in Christianity. He hungered and thirsted for his own salvation. He wanted his soul to be saved.

His sincere belief in absolute Christian virtue contrasted with what he witnessed in the behavior, policies, conduct and politics of Roman Catholicism. He was more devoted to the religion than were his leaders.

But Martin Luther's success would not have come from his conduct alone. Luther's success came because of others who had set the stage beforehand to make the Protestant Reformation possible. One of the necessary things provided before Luther was Guttenberg's invention of the press. This made publication and distribution of books widely available for the first time.

Probably the most revolutionary and significant act of Martin Luther that led directly to Protestant success was his translation of the Bible from Latin – a language that most common people didn't speak or read – into the German

common language. Once that was done, with the Guttenberg printing press, for the first-time widespread reading of the Bible by the common man was possible. The Four Gospels, the letters of Paul and the other apostles, were read and understood by the common man for the first time because they could read or hear the words in a language they understood. The Catholic clergy had failed to communicate to the common man the New Testament in words the people could comprehend. All the Catholic hierarchy wanted from the common man was money, obedience and loyalty. Martin Luther, on the other hand, wanted people to understand Christ's Gospel.

Luther's most revolutionary act was translating the Bible text into the common language for the common man to read. After Luther it is taken for granted that every Christian ought to have access to the Bible in words they can read and understand. It is almost impossible for all Christians, Catholic and Protestant, to imagine the world before Luther.