

Reformation Fire: Why This 500th Anniversary Is Significant for Us Today

Five hundred years ago, on Oct. 31, 1517, German born Martin Luther (1483-1546) challenged the religious system of his day by posting his 95 Theses on a church door in Wittenberg. This one act ignited a flame that set things in motion to reform the Christianity of his day, thus beginning the Protestant Reformation.

This Reformation paved the way for us to experience the religious freedom we have today. Only once in every 500 years does a generation get the chance to celebrate such a milestone. As we reflect and look back at all of the spiritual territory that has been gained in the last 500 years, one must ask: "Why are we alive for such a time as this? What greater breakthroughs are ours to step into today so that for the next 500 years and beyond, people are walking in a greater inheritance in Christ?" Let's learn more about how we can position ourselves to tap into the momentum of what God has done in the past so that we can be launched into a greater destiny.

Ignited

While Martin Luther (1483-1546) was midway through his semester at law school in a nearby town in Germany, he decided to journey home to visit his family. On July 2, 1505, he got caught in a thunderstorm and was nearly hit by a bolt of lightning. Fearful of his life, he called out to heaven and made the promise that if he was delivered from the storm, he would become a monk. His life was spared. Two weeks later, true to his word, he joined the Augustinian order. From November 1510 to April 1511, he journeyed to Rome and was

disillusioned by the hypocrisy he witnessed going on within the Catholic Church. This seed of discontent with the Church would later grow. In 1512, Luther received his doctorate and then moved to Wittenberg to become a theology professor. In 1515, he studied Romans 1:17 and had the revelation that he was justified by faith. For the first time he began to realize his salvation in Christ was a gift and not something he had to earn. This book marked him so deeply that he eventually wrote a commentary on the book of Romans.

About a year later, Dominican priest Johann Tetzel came to his town to sell indulgences (penance and pardons to pay for sins). Luther was outraged at his approach and disagreed with certain premises behind this activity. The same night Frederick the Wise was due to offer indulgences on All Saints Day on Oct. 31, 1517, Luther posted his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door. His 95 Theses, also known as the *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, were translated from Latin into German, printed on the newly invented Gutenberg printing press, and then quickly spread throughout Europe.

Luther's 95 Theses were not initially intended to be a refined amendment to the pope. Originally, this was an act of inviting people to debate over these issues within the Catholic Church. However, God breathed on his declaration for justice and it served to be the catalyst to set things in motion for the Protestant Reformation which in turn transformed a religious system. Luther later translated the Bible from Latin into German so that common people could read it in their own language. He gave people the opportunity to encounter God on their own from the Bible.

This reformation brought religious freedom and freedom from the religious spirit. It transformed a religious system and freed people to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth. Old wine skins were challenged; new wine skins were overflowing with the wine from heaven. A new paradigm for the church was released where the common person could now connect

with God without having to go through a priest. The world is continuing to experience the ripple effects from Martin Luther following his convictions Oct. 31 and by his leadership throughout the Reformation.

Ripple Effect: The Great Awakening

Over 200 years later, on May 24, 1738, in London, John Wesley (1703-1791) “went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans.” In that moment, Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed” and was marked by the love of God like never before. Not long after this encounter, Wesley met with his community to pray and worship into the New Year 1739 where “the power of God came mightily upon” them. This gathering of hearts became the catalytic flame to ignite the Great Awakening. Following this outpouring, John Wesley and his brother Charles, later founded the Methodist Movement where they raised up, trained and launched many lay people into the ministry. Another new paradigm for church was born.

The Significance of Oct. 31

Nearly 400 years after the Protestant Reformation was birthed, Evan Roberts preached for the first time at Moriah Chapel in Wales on Oct. 31, 1904, the anniversary of the Reformation. When 17 people got saved that night, it was catalytic for the Welsh Revival, which brought in over 100,000 salvations in less than five months and would later influence the beginnings of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906. Oct. 31 marks the beginnings of two very significant and influential moves of God centuries apart, making this day a deep well of revival to tap into.

Momentum of the Ages

Luther’s act of following his convictions and not being afraid to challenge the status quo has continued to impact us 500 years later. The momentum has already begun. Martin Luther,

the Moravians, John Wesley, Evan Roberts and many others have already paved the way for us to walk in great freedom today. This is not a new wave of revival but one that has been building for generations. The Reformation, The Great Awakening, The Welsh Revival and other moves of God are all contributing to the momentum of this upcoming billion-soul harvest, Third Great Awakening and new wave on the horizon.

What are we going to do today with the ground already gained on our behalf? How will we position ourselves to build upon the momentum that has gone before us? What further ground needs to be taken to advance God's kingdom in our generation today so that it will set things in motion for the next 500 years ahead?

We are in a historic shift with this 500-year anniversary. God is calling us to a new level of holiness, consecration, connection, surrender and possession of the Holy Spirit. This is necessary so that this upcoming wave of revival will not crush us. It's time to walk in purity, passion and total obedience so that when the swell comes, we are positioned to ride the biggest wave of revival this world has ever seen!

I encourage you, like Luther, to be courageous to speak out against injustices or what you know isn't right. What you tolerate will dominate. Now is the time to take a stand for what you believe in. Step out and use the voice God has given you to communicate your heart. Generations are waiting for you to arise and shine. I bless you with courage to live from the depths of your heart today. May you be baptized in the love of God and be ignited with a fresh Reformation fire that burns deep within you today, all for His glory.