

When It's Absolutely Wrong to Submit

On Dec. 10, 1520, students at the University of Wittenberg in Germany built a large bonfire and Martin Luther proceeded to burn a papal bull (official decree) that ordered him to recant within 60 days or suffer excommunication as a heretic. This was serious, for excommunication for heresy commonly led to death by burning or beheading.

Luther had received the order on Oct. 10. He, therefore, allowed the 60 days to expire and then, in an open and defiant act against Pope Leo and the Roman Church, he publicly burned the papal bull, the Roman canon law and other books supporting the pope. There would be no turning back.

Leo responded by announcing Luther's formal excommunication as of Jan. 3, 1521. He referred to Luther as "a wild boar" who had invaded the Lord's vineyard. Excommunication was also threatened against anyone who would harbor Luther or his friends.

All princes and magistrates were ordered to seize Luther and his followers and turn them over to the proper authorities. Christians were ordered not to read, print or publish any of Luther's books, but instead to burn them, and such occurred in many cities

Luther was not fazed. He was convinced he was on the side of truth, and in a letter to the German prince, Frederick the Wise, stated, "Your Grace knows, if not, I make known to you, that I have the gospel, not from men, but from heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Luther knew what he believed and why he believed it; and he was willing to risk everything, including life itself, for the truth of the gospel.

What about you and me? Are we totally committed to the truth of the gospel? Are we willing to buck religious tradition, political-correctness, cultural acceptance and whatever else is contrary to the truth that is in Jesus? Are we ready to risk it all, including life itself, so that the truth may continue to the next generation?

I am here reminded of the words of Paul concerning the insistence of the Judaizers that his Gentile convert, Titus, be circumcised. He wrote, "We did not yield to subjection to them, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5).

This article by Eddie Hyatt was excerpted from his book, *The Charismatic Luther*, available from Amazon and his website at