

## Courage: “Here I Stand”

Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume I*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

*Martin Luther stood firmly on the truths of the Gospel, though it disagreed with the teachings of the church of that day. He could do no less.*

I could not keep quiet. I was angry at the church officials who tried to fool people by selling them pieces of paper called indulgences that said their sins—past and future—were forgiven.

When I had traveled to Rome, I had seen the luxuries the clergy had bought with these poor people’s money. A piece of paper couldn’t forgive sins! I had also discovered how wicked some popes and other leaders had become. For centuries, they had controlled people and nations. One pope was even accused of poisoning the pope before him!

With its priests and popes doing so many sinful things, how could the Roman Church promise forgiveness to anyone? Besides, I had seen in the Bible that no one could earn or buy God’s favor: “The just shall live by faith” and faith alone. I knew Christians could only live good lives when they trusted Jesus Christ to help them.

I had to do something! So, on October 31, 1517, I nailed a list of ninety-five objections or “theses” to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. I began writing books and pamphlets telling about church wrongdoings.

These actions made many church and state leaders angry. I had challenged their power and uncovered their evil ways. I could not be ignored.

My enemies tried to force me to stand trial in Rome. But my friends, such as Duke Frederick of Saxony, knew this was dangerous. If I went to Rome, I would likely be killed. Instead, they arranged for my trial to take place in Germany in the city of Worms. The Emperor Charles V would be there to oversee my trial.

Dr. John Eck, a famous Roman Catholic scholar, was chosen to prosecute me.

At the trial, Eck placed a pile of my books on the table. “Will you give up these teachings?” he asked me.

I asked for some time to prepare a proper answer. The next day, I said that much of what I had written was the simple truth. No one would argue with it. I told them, “So there is no reason to give that part up.”

“Some of my other writings deal with the awful abuses of the Roman Church here in Germany. And everyone knows these problems are real, so that truth cannot be set aside. Besides, God made our minds free, so one’s conscience cannot be forced. That’s my answer.”

“Very clever,” Eck said to me. “Now give me a simple answer.”

“All right. Unless I can be convinced by the clear teachings of the Bible that I am wrong, I cannot and I will not retract what I have written. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen!”

*Courage sometimes means risking our own safety to do what is right.*