

Let Luther Speak for Himself

by Ian Paisley

Ian Paisley's sermon emphasizes Martin Luther's unwavering commitment to truth and his fierce opposition to the Papacy during the Reformation.

Scripture: Matthew 5:10, Ephesians 6:13, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 10:35, 1 Peter 4:16

Topics: "Reformation History", "Persevering Faith"

Description

Ian Paisley preaches with fervor and boldness, echoing the spirit of reformers like Luther and Knox. He emphasizes the importance of standing firm in the truth, even if it means facing opposition and persecution. Paisley draws parallels between the struggles of the reformers against the Papacy and the challenges faced by believers in upholding biblical principles in the face of adversity. Through his passionate delivery, he encourages unwavering faith and dedication to God's Word, regardless of the cost.

Transcript

"I am born to be a rough controversialist," says Luther. "I clear the ground, pull up the weeds, fill up ditches, and smooth the roads; but to build, to plant, to sow, to water, to adorn the country, belongs to Melanchthon."

"My style, rude and skilful, vomits up a deluge, a chaos of words, boisterous and impetuous as a wrestler contending with a thousand successive monsters; and, if I may presume to compare small things with great, methinks there has been vouchsafed me a portion of the four-fold spirit of Elijah, rapid as the wind and devouring as fire, which roots up mountains and dashes rocks to pieces; and to thee, on the contrary, the mild murmur of the light and refreshing breeze. I feel, however, comfort from the consideration that our common Father hath need, in this His immense family, of each servant; of the hard against the hard, the rough against the rough, to be used as a sharp wedge against hard knots. To clear the air and fertilise the soil, the rain which falls and sinks as the dew is not enough - the thunder-storm is still required." (August 20th, 1530.)

I am far from believing myself without fault; but I can, at least, glorify myself with St. Paul, that I cannot be accused of hypocrisy, and that I have always spoken the truth, perhaps, it is true, a little too harshly; but I would rather sin in disseminating the truth with hard words, than shamefully retain it captive. If great lords are hurt by them, they can go about their own business, without thinking of mine or of my doctrines. Have I done them wrong or injustice? If I sin, it will be for God to pardon me."

Such was Luther, and Knox was worthy of him.

No prophet ever shrank from his mission with more distress than Luther; on November 29th, 1521, he wrote thus to the Austin Friars of Wittenberg:

"Daily I feel how difficult it is to divest oneself of scruples long entertained. Oh! The pain it has cost me, though with the Scriptures before me, to justify myself to myself, for daring singly to set myself up against the Pope, and hold him as Antichrist! What tribulations have I not suffered! How often have I not addressed to myself in bitterness of the spirit the arguments of the Papists: 'Art thou alone wise? Are all others in error? Can they have been so many years deceived? What if thou deceivest thyself, and draggest along with thee in thy error so many souls to everlasting damnation?' Thus I used to argue within myself until Jesus Christ with His own, His infallible Word, fortified me, and strengthened my soul against such arguments, as a rock raised above the waves laughs their fury to scorn." (Letters, Vol. 2, p. 107.)

When Luther was summoned to retract his doctrines, he nobly replied:

"The second part of my books is what I have written against the Papacy and the Papists, and not against them individually or personally, but against their most shameful doctrines and practices, by which they have demoralised the whole Christian world both in body and soul. It can neither be denied nor dissembled, what the experience and the complaints of the whole world acknowledge, that the consciences of faithful men have been grieved, tortured, and harrowed by the Papal dogmas, especially in this renowned empire of Germany, distracted by a tyranny almost incredible, shamefully deforming everything without remorse, and regardless of the means by which it is effected; and yet, when any individuals are themselves convinced that the Papal laws and dogmas are contrary to the Gospel and the opinions of the Fathers, they are instantly condemned as heretics and reprobates. If, therefore, I were to retract this part of my books, I would relinquish everything, and I would give additional impulse to a tyranny already insupportable. I would not only, by this conduct, open windows, but even doors, to impiety, already so horrible, so grievously felt, and so widely extended, as to make it the most licentious, intolerable, and shameful system which the world ever witnessed. By the help of God, humble though I am, I shall not lend my feeble aid to prop such a system of iniquity and oppression."

Luther said, on his return to Augsburg, that if he had four hundred heads, he would rather lose them all, than revoke his article on faith. "No man in Germany, says Hutten, "despises death more than Luther."

Was it not in character for such a man, in reply to such a proposal, so to express himself? Hear him again:

"It was in the year 1517, when the profligate monk Tetzl, a worthy servant of the Pope and the Devil - for I am satisfied that the Pope is the agent of the Devil on earth - came among us selling indulgences, maintaining their efficacy, and impudently practising on the credulity of the people. When I beheld this unholy and detestable traffic taking place in open day, and thereby sanctioning and encouraging the most villainous crimes, I could not, although I was then a young Doctor in Divinity, refrain from protesting against it in the strongest manner, not only as directly contrary to the Scriptures, but as opposed to the canons of the Church."

Well might the Reformer, under the circumstances, exclaim:

"Farewell, Rome, most accursed abomination! Thou containest so much folly and impiety, that thou art unworthy even to be refuted. Openly hast thou declared, by this infamous procedure, in what spirit thou

hast promulgated the detestable bull."

Let those who reserve all their viperation for Knox and Luther, and all their sympathy for their enemies, reflect on the deeds of the latter. He says:

"The edict condemning my book was drawn up, I have been told, by Aleandro, a man zealous enough in the service of his masters, the Pope and the Devil. In that edict I was termed a demon in the shape of a man, and in the dress of a monk. The people were exhorted to seize me and my friends, to destroy our property, and burn our productions! Those monsters gave it out that whoever murdered me would render a good service to the Church; but I have been spared to fight against their iniquities, and to wage war against their metropolis of blasphemy. I have seen the fruits of my labours, and I give thanks to God for it this day. It is His doing - it is marvellous in my eyes."

Such was the city Luther was adjured by his friends not to enter, when he bravely replied:

"Were there as many devils in Worms as there are roof-tiles, I would go on." Alone in that assemblage, before all emperors, and principalities, and powers, spoke he forth these final and ever memorable words: "It is neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen!"

Let us hear the glorious man again, when carried away by the Elector, and hidden from his bloodthirsty enemies in the forest castle of Wartburg:

"When I reflect on these horrible times of blasphemy, I wish my eyes to weep rivers of tears for the unhappy desolation of those souls living under the reign of sin and perdition. The monstrous Chair at Rome, placed in the midst of the church, affects to honour God; the pontiffs pretend to render Him homage, while the pretenders to piety outrage His laws; in short, according to them, there is nothing which they would not undertake for His service. Meanwhile, Satan is on the alert; his heart is yearning for the destruction of men, and he opens wide his mouth of torment. He delights in the perdition of men! Here I do nothing all day; I am in idleness; I merely eat and drink. The only consolation is my Bible, which I regularly peruse in both Greek and Hebrew. I intend to write a tract on auricular confession. I am resolved also to continue my annotations on the Book of Psalms, and the books and documents which I have received from Wittenberg will greatly aid me."

Who will deny that such language is authorised, nay, demanded, by the occasion? Let us hear the illustrious Advocate, still in his forest castle, again:

"Poor brother that I am, living in a desert, and in captivity, see what a conflagration I have again kindled! I have burnt a large hole in the pocket of the Papists: I have attacked the Confessional!" What can I do now, or what shall I hereafter do? Where will they find a sufficient quantity of brimstone, bitumen, iron, and wood, to burn to ashes such a heretic as I am? They will be hardly able to raise even the windows of the church to allow to the vociferations of their saints and priests to escape against Luther at this sermon. Whatsoever things they may inculcate on the poor people, it is not difficult to preach that which they know and which they have prepared.

"Kill! Kill!" , they cry; 'kill that heresiarch, who wishes to overthrow the whole ecclesiastical state, who endeavours to erase and eradicate Christianity!' I earnestly hope, if I were worthy, that they would come, and entrust me with the measure of these Fathers; but it is not time yet; my hour is not yet come. Before I

die, I must render that generation of vipers more furious. So far as they are concerned, I shall die game."

Writing to his venerable father, he says:

"What is it to me whether the Pope slays me, or condemns me to hell? He cannot raise the dead, and he may slay me as often as he pleases, for I care little for his censures, and, in short, I never wish them to be removed until Rome, that kingdom of abomination and perdition, is destroyed."

Referring to the counsels of the timid, our immortal Reformer says:

"There are many who think and complain that I am too fierce and keen against the Papacy. On the contrary, I lament that I am too mild. I wish I could breath thunderclaps against Pope and Popery, and that every word was a thunderbolt!

"The Kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of mercy, grace, and goodness. The kingdom of the Pope is a kingdom of lies and damnation!"

Is not the language true? If so, is it possible that human vocables cannot be collocated with excessive strength? No phraseology of man can reach the climax of the atrocity which distinguishes the Popish system! Let us again listen to the great Friend of truth, and righteousness, and mankind:

"The Devil is like a fowler; he wrings the necks of the birds he catches, and kills them; he preserves very few alive. Those which allure other birds to his snare, and sing the songs he wants them, he puts into a cage, that by their seducings he may catch more. I hope he will not get me into his cage.

"When I write against the Pope, I am not melancholy, for then I labour with my whole heart, and I write with such joy, that Doctor Reisenpusch not long ago said to me: 'I marvel that you can be so merry.' I replied to him: 'Neither the Devil, his lieutenant the Antichrist of Rome, nor his shaven retinue, can make me sad, for I know that they are Christ's enemies; and therefore I fight against them with all my heart.'"

Brave man! "Well done" is due from earth and heaven to such courage and such devotion! We must cite one passage more, the most violent Luther ever uttered:

"Whether I am censured or not as being too violent on this occasion, I care not. It shall be my glory and honour in future to be accused of tempesteing and raging against the Papists. For more than ten years I have humbled myself before them, and given them fair words. They have grown proud and haughty. Well, then, since they are incorrigible, since there is no further hope of shaking their infernal resolutions by mildness, I break with them for ever! I will pursue them with my imprecations without stop or without rest to my tomb! The Papists shall never more have a good word for me! Would that my thunders and my lightnings roared and blazed over their grave!

"I can hardly pray when I think on them without cursing. I cannot say, Hallowed by thy name, without adding, Cursed be the name of the Papists, and of all those who blaspheme God! If I say, Thy kingdom come, I add, Cursed be the Popedom, and all kingdoms that are opposed to Thine! If I say, Thy will be done, I add, Cursed be the designs of the Papists, and of all those - may they perish! - who fight against Thee! In this way I pray daily, and with me all the true faithful in Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, I have a good and loving heart for all the world, and my greatest enemies themselves know this well."

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