

DCF:

Today we celebrate the Reformation, an event that occurred in Germany over 500 years ago. What is it and why is it so important? After all, isn't that ancient history? What does it have to do with us here in the United States in the year 2020? Well, let me give you some background.

The event that we call the Reformation was primarily a religious battle. Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, gradually came to see the true state of affairs in organized religion. It wasn't about Jesus and what He had done to save us from our sins. It was about money. It was about working your way to heaven, which didn't work one little bit. It was about corruption and selfishly serving sinful desires. Oh, the Bible was still there. The truth was available if you could read Latin. But the religious leaders sure didn't care to make the free gift of God known to their people. Over the years the devil had corrupted, curtailed and contained the Gospel of Jesus into a very small, almost inaccessible corner of the world.

The time had come to declare war. God drafted Martin Luther to be His general in the war for the truth of the Gospel. God had created this man for this time. He gave Martin Luther the gifts of intelligence, courage and passion to sweep away the cobwebs of corruption and restore the sweet news of free and full forgiveness to the people. Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit energized Martin Luther to do battle with the forces of Satan and sin. Throughout his life, he spoke the truth to power, never giving up, always proclaiming the truth that God so loved the world that he sent His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now, you might get the impression that Martin Luther was a unique individual, doing something that no one had ever done before. And, you would be wrong. He was following a very familiar path, the path of every believer. Oh, his path was certainly more well known, but Christians have been doing the same for thousands of years. Today we realize that “**THE REFORMATION WAR CONTINUES**”, even to this very day. Jesus is still sending us into battle, and we can expect opposition.

### ***Part One: Jesus sends us into battle***

In our text for today, we see Jesus sending His apostles into spiritual battle. He had drafted them into His army, the army of God that we call the Church. He chose them to follow Him and His directions. He gave them the skills, the determination and the passion to tell others about the way to heaven. He sent them into battle, knowing that they would be attacked. ***“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.”*** From history, especially the history of the Bible, we see that this was true. They were verbally attacked. They were hauled into court on trumped up charges. They were physically attacked and many of them were killed because of the message that they brought. The devil will use any and every means to silence the voice of God, and believers will suffer in the battle for the truth. It's been that way ever since Jesus came to this earth, and will be that way until He comes again on Judgement Day.

And, truth be told, so often we'd rather not. We don't like conflict. We want an easy life. You know, we go along to get along. If our lives could be comfortable, calm and somewhat painless, why, that would be fine with us. And after all, I'm just tired of fighting about anything. I don't want to talk about politics, or Covid-19, or who takes out the trash. I'm tired of fighting with my family about who is hosting Christmas this year or where Susie is going to college. On top of it all, I'm supposed to fight for the truth of the Gospel? I'd rather not, our sinful human nature says.

But guess what? We don't have a choice. Jesus sent the apostles into spiritual battle. He sent Martin Luther into spiritual battle. And, He sends us into spiritual battle. We've been drafted by God to be His soldiers. God's selective service chose us from before this world was created to be His children, His soldiers here on earth. He chose to give us a saving faith, along with all the talents that we have as human beings. He's given us resources to use in battle, the resources of our voices and our hearts. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit gives us the courage and passion to stand up for God's truth in our lives. God gives us everything we need to fight His battle for the souls of this world.

Sometimes we fight the battle up front. We tell our son or daughter what God has to say about the

culture of our times. We remind them of God's love and show them how to live a life that pleases Him. We talk about forgiveness and resisting temptation. We may even do the same with other people in our lives. That's fighting the battle up front.

And sometimes we battle from a support position. In any battle, you have the front line troops and the support troops. Both are needed. The front line troops are the ones firing the bullets. The support troops keep the bullets coming. In our spiritual battle, there are times when we supply the front line soldiers with the supplies that they need. We support pastors, teachers and missionaries financially so they can battle. We pray for them. We encourage them. We stand behind them, giving our personal support to what they are doing. Sometimes we battle up front. Sometimes we battle from a support position. But we're all in this battle together.

And you might wonder - why do we even have to battle? The truth is very, very simple. If you are a Christian, you will face opposition. The battle lines have already been drawn.

### ***Part Two: Expect opposition***

Jesus has some very good advice as we go into battle. ***"Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."*** Shrewd as snakes - know what you're getting into. Know your enemy. In Jesus' time, it was the rulers. The local government was made up of elders and priests, a combination of church and state united to suppress the Gospel message. In Luther's time it was the same thing. Bishops, priests and city rulers had equal influence. Luther was persecuted for attacking the church for false doctrine, and the government supported this. He was branded an outlaw and could be killed by anyone with no penalty. He knew this. He was as shrewd as a snake. He knew who his enemies were.

Do we? Our enemies are those that do not believe in Jesus and will use whatever they can to silence us. It may be a government declaration. It may be a family member. It may be a policy at work. The devil and his allies will use any tactic to try and keep us from spreading the news of the Gospel. In the apostle's time and Luther's, there was the threat of physical punishment. We see that same tactic used around the world, as thousands of believers are killed or tortured for their faith each year. It may be the threat of economic pain, or pure peer pressure. It may be opposition in your own family. Jesus, being God, could look into the future and see what would happen. ***"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death."***

We will always have spiritual enemies in our lives. Why? Because we believe and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Because we know of God's love for all people and want what He wants. All people to believe in Him. Be shrewd as snakes. Know your enemy. Sometimes the enemy are the unbelievers in this world. Sometimes the enemy is our own sinful nature, whispering to us to give up the fight. Just be quiet. Go along to get along.

But we can't, because God has drafted us into His army. So, how do we keep on battling for the Lord? First, know the truth. Study the Bible. Talk to your fellow believers about God's Word. Attend a Bible class in person or on line. Pray for insight. Pray for strength. Put a few more bullets in your ammo case by learning a few more Bible passages.

Second, be ***"as innocent as doves."*** Be blameless in your life, as best you can. And finally, lean on the Lord. Trust Him for strength. He'll give it to you when you need it most. Stand up for the truth, not belligerently or angrily, but calmly and consistently.

Finally, remember the Lord's promises. He will always be with you. He will supply all your needs. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and you will receive the crown of righteousness. ***"He who stands firm to the end will be saved."***

Oh, yes. There is an end to this battle that God has drafted us to fight. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!  
AMEN