

To the Ends of the Earth



Twenty two years ago a Frontline Fellowship Mission team was approaching a remote village in Cuando Cubango province (what the Portuguese referred to as the ends of the earth) in Angola. The team heard the sound of enthusiastic singing. They immediately recognised the tune, even though they could not understand the words.

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

What they were hearing was: *Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is our God), Dr. Martin Luther's great Battle Hymn of the Reformation, in Ovimbundu. This beloved Hymn, based on Psalm 46, is one of the favourite Hymns of the Persecuted Church, and one of the most translated Hymns in history.

Celebrating the Reformation

A large banner was stretched across the road proclaiming **31 October 1517**. It was Reformation Day! School children had posters and projects with hand drawings of Reformers, Dr. Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, William Tyndale and John Calvin.



Battle Cries of the Reformation

The great battle cries of the Reformation were boldly displayed: ***Sola Christus! Sola Scriptura! Sola Gratia! Sola Fide! Soli Deo Gloria!***

Christ alone is the head of the Church. Scripture alone is our authority. Salvation is by the grace of God alone. Justification is received by Faith alone. Everything is to be done for the Glory of God alone.

The Greatest Gift

These Ovimbundu believers had suffered much. Their church buildings had been destroyed by the communists. They effectively had no Bibles. What was left of the few Bibles and Hymn books that they had possessed were now in tatters. When they received the Scriptures they declared: *"This is the greatest gift anyone could ever ask for! The Word of God in my own language!"*

Resolution

We were rebuked by the steadfast devotion of these Ovimbundu believers. Here they were, at what had been described as the ends of the earth, and they were celebrating Reformation Day. Since then we have resolved to celebrate 31 October as the birthday of all Protestant, Evangelical, Bible-Believing churches.



First Things First

The Lord Jesus taught: ***"But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."***

Matthew 6:33

Peace with God

It was Dr. Martin Luther's earnest quest for peace with God, and his intensive study of the Scriptures, which led him to challenge the unethical fund raising tactics of the papacy and launch the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's love for the Word of God and his dedication

to truth, led him to challenge the entire ecclesiastical and political authority of the Roman Catholic church and the holy Roman empire.

Repentance Not Indulgences

On 31 October 1517, Professor Martin Luther nailed his [95 Theses](#) onto the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg. The 95 Theses begins with Repentance:

"Since our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ says: Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near, He wants the whole life of a believer to be a life of Repentance."

Professor Luther maintained that no sacrament can take away our responsibility to respond to Christ's command to true repentance, evidenced by outward change, a transformation and renewal of our entire life. Luther emphasised that it is God alone who can forgive sins and indulgences are a fraud.



Captive to the Word

Summoned before the Emperor, Martin Luther declared: ***"Unless I am convinced by***

Scripture, or by clear reasoning, that I am in error - for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves - I cannot recant, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen."

Scripture Alone

In this courageous stand Martin Luther argued for freedom of conscience based upon the authority of Scripture. From these foundational principles flowed constitutional authority: The principle of *Lex Rex* (The Law is King!) No one is above God's Law. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Everyone is under God's Law. ***Sola Scriptura*** eroded the foundations of political and ecclesiastical totalitarianism.

Foundations for Freedom

The Protestant emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the supreme authority of Scripture led to the concept of representative government and constitutional authority as the supreme law of the land. By emphasising the Biblical doctrine of faith as a gift of God, Martin Luther undermined the Catholic Inquisition and provided the Theological foundations for religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

Why Celebrate the Reformation?



...of Reformation, the greatest century of missions, the ... people may rejoice in you, I said 80.9 ... civilisation