[Reformation Day: 500 Years Since Wittenberg](#) **[1]**

Submitted by Wessel on Tuesday, 31 October 2017 - 06:25

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> None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
> not give God a ransom for him.
> For the redemption of their life is costly,
> no payment is ever enough,
> that he should live on forever,
> that he should not see corruption.
>
> Psalm 49:7–9

This passage reminds me of Johann Tetzel. Five hundred years ago today, he was traveling through Germany, selling indulgences to raise money for the Roman Catholic church. Indulgences, according to the Roman Catholic church, can be bought or earned to lessen the suffering of someone who has died and is in purgatory[1]. "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings / the soul from purgatory springs," was Tetzel's jingle, and many poor and pious people flocked to give him their money.

Such was the state of the Western church in the 16th century: its leadership had become corrupt and its adherents deceived.

> But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.
>
> Psalm 49:15

Our redemption was indeed costly. Unimaginably costly, and profoundly beautiful: that God the Son would offer Himself up as a willing sacrifice to be slaughtered for our sins. No more is needed, than accepting Jesus's offer of salvation and redemption.

Today, exactly 500 years ago, Martin Luther took a hammer to a door, and broke down the distinction between Saints (those who are revered in paintings and statues) and saints (those who accept the grace and forgiveness of Christ). What followed was a long, painful and turbulent time; but from it was born a widespread return to biblical theology.

- [1.](#) Some Christians belief that purgatory is a kind of refining crucible before someone is actually allowed into heaven. There is no biblical evidence that such a place exists.

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