

## Footstep #19 – Will Luther Remain Confident in the Pope? - 1518

Luther to Sylvester Prierias, Order of St. Dominc, Master of the Sacred Palace at Rome –

**“I am sorry now that I despised Tetzal. Ridiculous as he was, he was more acute than you. You cite no Scripture. You give no reasons. Like an insidious devil you pervert the Scriptures. You say that the Church consists virtually in the pope. What abominations will you not have to regard as the deeds of the Church? Look at the ghastly shedding of the blood by Julius II (pope). Look at the outrageous tyranny of Boniface VIII (pope), who as the proverb declares, ‘came in as a wolf, reigned as a lion, and died as a dog.’ If the Church consists representatively in the cardinals, what do you make of a general council of the whole Church? You call me a leper because I mingle truth with error. I am glad you admit there is some truth. The Emperor Maximilian and the Germans will not tolerate this.”**  
(Roland Bainton. *Here I Stand*, p. 68)

Sylvester Prierias was commissioned by Pope Leo X to get Luther to apologize for his Ninety-five Theses. He wrote four charges against Luther:

1. The pope is the head of the church
2. The pope is infallible and cannot err.
3. Anyone who denies the teaching of the church and the pope is a heretic.
4. The church can establish customs and rules in regards to faith and ethics.

Sylvester Prierias argued that the pope is the head of the church, that the pope cannot err, one who denies the teaching of the church and the pope is a heretic, and that the church can establish customs in regard to faith and ethics. Basically, Prierias drew the “line in the sand”. Up to this point, Luther trusted in the pope and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church – always hoping that the broken system could be reformed. Should Luther make the mistake of denying the authority of the pope (and he will in July 1519), his teachings will be heretical. The penalty for heresy is death.