

Huldrych Zwingli was a priest in the Catholic church of Switzerland in the 1500s. Like most priests of that time he had little education, but seeing his need to be better equipped, he devoutly dedicated himself to learning Greek and Hebrew. After mastering Greek, he broke from the traditional Sunday homily by simply reading through a book of the Bible in the original language and then translating it into German. He began with Matthew. Each Sunday he would pick up where he left off the week before. His next book was Acts and then the epistles.

His congregation was excited to hear the Scriptures in their own language. Typically the Mass had been in Latin which most did not understand. Before long the conflict of church doctrine and the clear reading of Scripture began to surface. Zwingli's defense before his hierarchical accusers was that he was just reading the Bible. Once the word went out in the native language of the people, they knew the liberating truth that could never be taken from them. The church in Switzerland was independently on its way to joining the reformation because of the Word of God.

Imagine those people hearing the word of God in their own language for the first time. It is still happening today in remote areas. The joy and wonder is hard to relate to for us who have heard the Scriptures all our life. Our Bibles often sit on our shelves all week and maybe get picked up on Sunday. Those folk were desperate for every word.

It still happens today. In North Korea, a single page of the Bible will be passed secretly from believer to believer and committed to memory. They treasure every word. Those who persecute the church know that the power is in the Word, which is why their main aim is to destroy every Bible they can find.

In Iran, students copy the Scriptures by hand into spiral bound notebooks so that they won't be discovered. Even open nations like India experience animosity toward the Word of God. I met a young woman at the Bible College in Mavelikara who shared her story with me. A friend of hers had invited her to a church where she accepted Jesus as her Savior. Her parents discovered her reading her Bible and destroyed it. They forbade her to attend the church, but she could not stay away. She obtained another Bible and carefully hid it in her room, making sure her parents were asleep when she read it by candlelight. One day her parents found where the Bible was hidden. They beat her and locked her in her room. After several days she escaped and made her way to the Bible College where I met her. It was her third year and she would soon graduate. She said she had to return to her village and share the Word with her family even if it meant her death.

I am going to share the letter of the Ephesians with you. Hear it as if you were hearing it for the first time. Listen to what it speaks to your heart. Make notes on what the Lord is saying to you. Hear it as written from the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It speaks to you today. Ponder what He is asking you to do about it. -
Read the Letter to the Ephesians- Next week we will begin our in depth study.