

A DIFFERENT HALLOWEEN STORY

Friday, October 31

Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1-3

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was howling through the trees and the rain poured down on a fearful 22-year-old man named Martin. As he hurried to get home, a bolt of lightning struck the ground near him. In terror, Martin cried out to his favorite saint, "St. Anne, help me! And I will become a monk." The young man made it home safely and, despite the objections of his family, left law school to enter the Augustinian monastery.

The year was 1505 when Martin entered the monastery in Erfurt, Germany. He was very troubled as he studied of the holiness and justice of God and was very aware of his own sin. He lived in constant fear that God would not forgive him. Martin became a very diligent monk, but no amount of study, discipline, fasting, or prayer could bring Martin a sense of peace with God.

In 1510, Martin was chosen to go on a mission to Rome. He was excited during the 800-mile trip to see the Vatican and shrines dedicated to the saints. But he would be disappointed. Many of the priests had become corrupt with power and hungry for money. He wrote that he went to Rome with onions and came back with garlic. The experience left a bad taste in his mouth. This further deepened his confusion and depression.

In 1513, Martin became the chair of Bible at the university in Erfurt. He taught the Psalms and then began teaching the book of Romans. As he prepared his lessons, Martin read Romans 1:16-17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Suddenly the light went on in Martin's soul. He need not fear the righteousness of God. Salvation was the free gift of God received solely by grace through faith. From that moment, Martin Luther's life was changed. Instead of doubt and fear, he boldly proclaimed the truth of God's Word against much opposition.

Luther wrote a list of 95 questions he had about some church practices that did not agree with Scripture. As the story goes, he nailed this list to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. Luther's action sparked the Protestant Reformation. That is why many Protestants celebrate October 31 as Reformation Day!

The main tenants of the reformation were (1) Salvation by FAITH ALONE, (2) the authority of SCRIPTURE ALONE, and (3) the PRIESTHOOD of every believer. We all have access to God and do not need a human mediator. We have God's Word as our ultimate authority. And we are not saved by good works or rituals, but by grace through faith. How are you living out these principles in your life?