

Reformation

The Story

Close your eyes. Pretend you lived in a time with no T.V., no computers, no cars, airplanes, or trains, no electricity, no movies, and no video games. Your life would be very different. Today we are going to talk about a man who lived during a time like this. This man lived over 500 years ago in the late 1400's and early 1500's. He lived after Jesus was alive, but he is not in the Bible at all. He is a very important man because God used him to teach people that they are saved only because Jesus died on the cross for their sins. This man's name was Martin Luther.

Martin Luther lived in Germany. He was born on November 10, 1483, in a city called Eisleben. His parents, Hans and Margareta Luther, did not have much money. They did take Martin Luther to church, but the church in Luther's day was not teaching what the Bible said. They taught that people would be forgiven of their sins if they believed in Jesus **and** did good works. The church even preached in Latin, a different language than the people spoke, so the Luthers and other Germans did not understand what was being said. The Luthers and other Germans did not have a Bible to read because Bibles were expensive and written in Latin. Hans and Margareta wanted Martin Luther to go to school. Hans Luther wanted him to become a lawyer, so when he got older, he went to the University of Erfurt.

One day when Martin Luther was coming home from the university, he was caught in a thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning almost hit Martin Luther. Instead of praying to Jesus for help, Martin Luther prayed to St. Anna. Because he was afraid of dying, Martin Luther said that if she would keep him safe from the storm, he would

become a monk. A monk was a person who lived in a monastery away from his family, prayed, read the Bible, and promised never to marry or become rich. St. Anna did not keep Martin Luther safe; God kept Martin Luther safe from the storm because God had a special job for Martin Luther to do.

In 1505 Martin Luther became a monk because he felt guilty about his sins. He viewed God as an angry judge ready to punish him because of his sins. Martin Luther was taught that he had to be good in order to have his sins forgiven. But Martin Luther realized that he could not be good enough. The more he tried to do what was right, the more he realized that he could not keep God's law perfectly. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). He tried to satisfy his guilt by sleeping on the floor and praying and cleaning and even beating himself. But these things did not help him to find peace from his sins. A friend told Martin Luther to read the Bible to feel better about his sins. Luther did, and the more he read the Bible, the more he found out that the church was not teaching what the Bible said. He read that people are forgiven of their sins **not** by the good things they do for Jesus but by the good thing that Jesus did for them. Sins are forgiven because Jesus died on the cross to take away the sins of the whole world. The Bible says that this forgiveness is a gift from God called grace. Grace is God's love for people even though they do not deserve it. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

While in the monastery Luther studied to become a priest. Then in 1508 he left the monastery to preach and teach at the University of Wittenberg. While preparing for his classes,



Martin Luther found more truths about God's salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Martin Luther was realizing that the church's teaching on forgiveness and salvation was opposed to God's teaching in the Bible. This became very clear when the church wanted to raise money to build St. Peter's Church in Rome, Italy.

The church started to sell special pieces of paper called indulgences. A man named John Tetzel sold these indulgences that said if the people bought them, their sins were forgiven. This is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that forgiveness of sins is free for everyone because Jesus died for all people. Martin Luther did not like the selling of indulgences. He wrote 95 theses or sentences that told the church what they were teaching was wrong. He took them to the church in Wittenberg, and nailed them on the church door. The door of the church was a place where people read important announcements. These 95 theses were nailed on October 31, 1517. On this day we say the Reformation started. The Reformation was a changing from what the church taught to what God taught in the Bible.

The church was very angry with what Martin Luther had written and preached. The church accused Martin Luther of preaching false doctrine. They asked him to change his teaching. After not being able to convince Martin Luther he was wrong, the Pope excommunicated Martin Luther from the church in 1520. Excommunication meant Martin Luther was no longer a member of the church and according to the church he could not be saved from his sins.

Emperor Charles V, ruler over much of Europe, ordered a meeting called a Diet to discuss Martin Luther's teaching. In April of 1521 the meeting was held in Worms, Germany. At the Diet, the church representatives told Martin Luther to take back, recant, everything he preached, taught, and wrote or he would become an outlaw, a criminal. Martin Luther prayed to God for help and said that he could not take back what he taught because it was what the Bible said. Because Martin Luther said this, the church

said that anyone could kill Martin Luther, and they would not be arrested. God was still watching over Martin Luther. Some friends of Martin Luther kidnaped him and took him to a castle called the Wartburg. Here Martin Luther was hidden away safe from his enemies. Martin Luther used this time to write. He translated the New Testament into German so the people could read the Bible for themselves instead of having the church tell them what to believe. Now people could see that forgiveness of sins came only by believing that Jesus died for their sins.

About a year later Martin Luther returned to Wittenberg. He still preached that the only way a person is saved is by believing that Jesus died on the cross to forgive sins. Martin Luther started writing more books and many hymns. He wrote the Large and Small Catechisms for fathers to teach God's Word to their children. He also wrote the famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Martin Luther got married to Katherina von Bora and had six children. Then on February 18, 1546 Martin Luther died in the same city where he was born, Eisleben. God blessed Martin Luther throughout his life. God also used Martin Luther to keep the teachings of the Bible correct and alive. The church was teaching many things that were against God's Word, but God caused a Reformation, a changing from what the church taught to what God taught in the Bible.

God's Word says that all people are saved because Jesus came and lived a perfect life for us, died on the cross, and rose again from the dead. Because of this, the sins of the whole world are taken away. When people believe in Jesus as their Savior, God does not see their sins, but God sees Jesus' perfection. We call this teaching justification by faith. God declares the whole world not guilty because of what Jesus has done. Faith in Jesus gives forgiveness of sins and salvation. God used Martin Luther to teach this Bible teaching to the people (Romans 3:19-28).

God also used Martin Luther to write the Bible in the German language so people could read it for themselves. God wants people to read

the Bible so they can learn about Jesus themselves. People do not need the church to tell them what God's Word says. They can learn about the forgiveness God gives through Jesus on their own as it is written in the Bible.

We thank the Lord that He used Martin Luther to show from God's Word that we are saved only through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. Forgiveness is a free gift given to us because God loves us. We cannot be saved by doing good works on our own.

God used Martin Luther to show people from the Bible that sins are forgiven and they are saved only because God loved everyone so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross. Sins are not forgiven because people do good works.

Passages

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."-
Ephesians 2:8-9

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:20, 24-25

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Romans 1:17

Hymn TLH -Hymn 262 v. 1

A mighty Fortress is our God,
A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need
That hath us now o'ertaken,
The old evil Foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal. Amen.

Prayer

Dear Father in heaven,
As we see how much You have blessed us through Martin Luther, help us to treasure Your Word above everything else in life. Remind us to daily search Your Word for the peace that comes from knowing You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die to forgive the sins of the whole world. Forgive us for neglecting Your Word. Keep us from thinking that we can contribute anything to our salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

What the Story Tells Us

As a monk, Luther tried to do good works in order to earn forgiveness from God because that is what the church taught. Later, Luther studied God's Word and found that this teaching was against what God taught in His Word.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Based on these passages, write a paragraph telling why we are not saved by good works.

What God Tells Us

Luther's life changed dramatically after the Diet of Worms in front of Charles V. He went from a free man to an outlaw who could be killed because of his stand on God's Word. Write a paragraph explaining how you would feel if you were Luther. You may never have to witness your faith in Jesus and His Word in front of emperors, kings, or princes, but there will be times in your life where trouble may come, fear may weaken your faith, and you may have to stand up for the truth. Read the following passages. Write a paragraph explaining how these passages can give you comfort and strength through your troubling times.

Psalm 23:4

Psalm 46:1

Matthew 10:32

I Corinthians 16:13

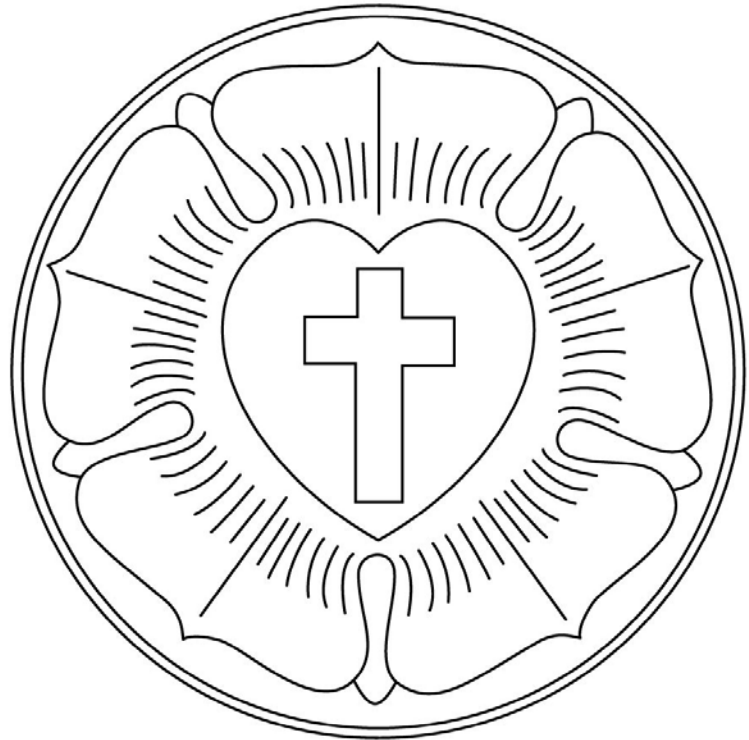
II Timothy 1:7

Your Turn .

Luther wrote many books, letters, and hymns that helped preach the Word of God in its truth and purity. We use many of these writings today, especially his hymns. Look in *The Lutheran Hymnal* and find the hymns that Luther wrote. He wrote a total of 24 of them. List them next to the numbers below.

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|----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 9. | 17. |
| 2. | 10. | 18. |
| 3. | 11. | 19. |
| 4. | 12. | 20. |
| 5. | 13. | 21. |
| 6. | 14. | 22. |
| 7. | 15. | 23. |
| 8. | 16. | 24. |

Color the Luther Seal.



Cross

black Christ's death on the cross forgives our sins.

Heart

red Faith in Christ's death is found in the heart.

Rose

white Faith in Jesus gives us peace, forgiveness, and joy.

Background

blue Faith in Christ's death gives heaven.

Ring

gold Life in heaven brings happiness and will be eternal.