

The Story of Martin Luther

Part 1

Martin Luther was born to a family of miners on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany. His parents dedicated their first son to God and named him after St. Martin of Tours. St. Martin was a soldier who had converted to Christianity in fourth century France. He had brought the love of Jesus to the people and destroyed the old pagan temples.



Martin started school when he was five. His teachers were Roman Catholic monks, who lived in a monastery.



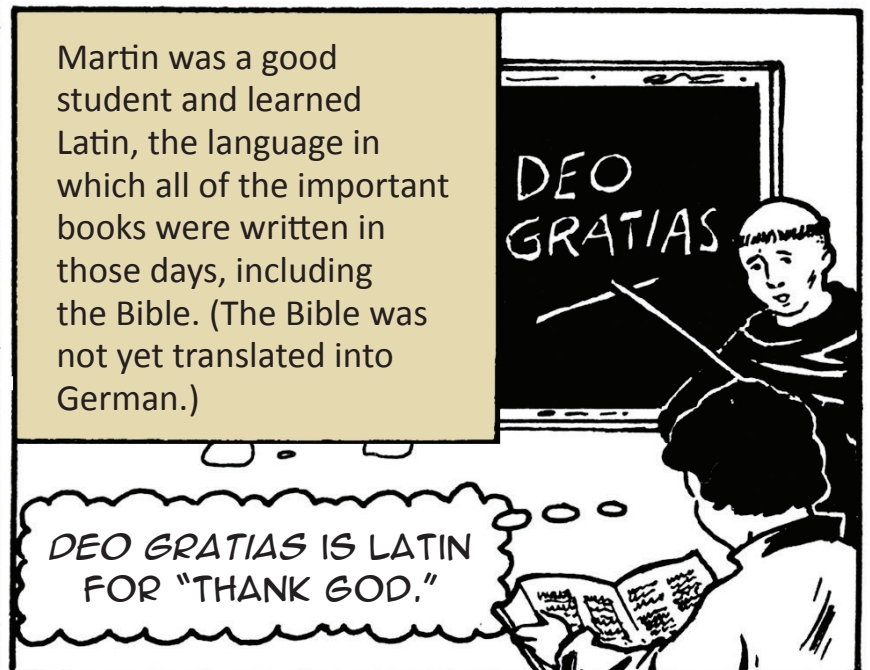
Martin's mother had a large family to feed.



Martin often sang in the streets to earn money to pay for his meals and his books.



Martin was a good student and learned Latin, the language in which all of the important books were written in those days, including the Bible. (The Bible was not yet translated into German.)



The monks taught the children that if they wanted to go to heaven when they died, they had to pay for their sins by doing good works and praying to the saints.



Martin always felt like God was angry with him. Though he had learned about God, he didn't understand that God is love (1 John 4:8).



The only time he felt close to God was when he walked by himself through the woods.



EVERYTHING IS SO BEAUTIFUL.
IT'S AS IF GOD IS EVERYWHERE!

Martin would often sing as he walked. One day while passing by a church—



EXCUSE ME, YOUNG MAN.

WHO TAUGHT YOU
TO SING LIKE THAT?



NO ONE TAUGHT ME,
SIR.

I JUST LIKE TO SING!
I OFTEN EARN A FEW
COINS BY SINGING IN
THE STREETS.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO
SING IN MY CHOIR?



I'D BE VERY GLAD
TO, SIR!

And that's when Martin received his first training to sing, a skill that God was going to wonderfully use later on. Martin also learned to play the flute and the lute, a stringed instrument which is similar to a guitar.



Martin was a brilliant student, and continued his education at the University of Erfurt, where he eventually studied to become a lawyer.

MARTIN, WITH YOUR QUICK MIND, YOU'LL SOON KNOW EVERY DETAIL OF THE LAW.



THANK YOU, SIR.

One of the greatest events of Martin's life happened one day at the university.



HMM, THE HOLY BIBLE. THIS IS PROBABLY AN INTERESTING BOOK. I THINK I'LL READ IT.

"FOR GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT IN ORDER THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM" (JOHN 3:17 ESV).



FASCINATING! I WONDER IF THAT MEANS I CAN BE SAVED, EVEN THOUGH I'M SO BAD?

WHY DIDN'T SOMEONE TELL ME BEFORE THAT THE BIBLE SAYS THIS?



From then on, Martin was deeply interested in reading the Bible to learn more about God and how to please Him.

Before continuing on with advanced studies, Martin Luther went to spend a brief holiday with his parents and friends.

HA! HA!

YOU ARE AS GOOD WITH YOUR LUTE AS YOU ARE WITH YOUR BOOKS.



MY SON IS A FINE YOUNG MAN. HE'S A SCHOLAR. WHY, EVEN I CALL HIM "SIR."

HA, HA, HA!



I'M HONORED

HERE'S TO MARTIN! MAY HE BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST LAWYERS IN ALL OF GERMANY!

PROST!
PROST!



THANK YOU, MY FRIENDS.

But God had other plans for him.
During the journey back to the university:

DON'T WORRY, MARTIN, IT'S JUST A SUMMER STORM. WE'LL MAKE IT BACK SAFELY.



WE MUST FIND SHELTER!

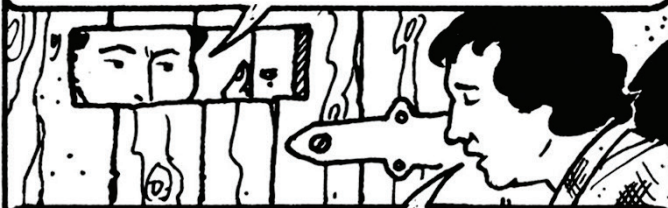
Suddenly, lightning struck!





And so, Martin, afraid of death, decided to leave his family and his career, and joined the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt.

WHAT DO YOU WANT, MY SON?



I BEG YOUR MERCY AND GOD'S MERCY, FATHER. I WANT TO BECOME A MONK.

LIFE IN A MONASTERY IS VERY HARD, MY SON. THERE IS LITTLE FOOD, LITTLE SLEEP, MANY LONG PRAYERS, AND MUCH HARD WORK. ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THIS TYPE OF LIFE?



YES, FATHER. I'LL DO ALL I CAN!

Martin thought that he could earn God's mercy through his good works. And how hard he tried! He did everything he was told and much more.



He went without food for days at a time and lay on the cold stone floor for hours saying long prayers.



He would go begging sometimes for days on end.



² money given to help the poor

He spent so much time telling the monks about his sins that they didn't want to listen anymore.

BROTHERS, I AM A TERRIBLE SINNER!
I MUST CONFESS.



MARTIN, PLEASE. LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT IT.

Many years later Martin said, "If ever a monk could get to heaven by his monkery it was I." But the more he tried to be perfect, the more he realized what a hopeless sinner he was. It was impossible to save himself no matter what he did!

Then one day, Martin spoke from his heart to the head of the monastery.

FATHER, I CAN'T FIND PEACE IN
MY SOUL. GOD IS ANGRY AT ME!



DON'T BE A FOOL, BROTHER MARTIN.
GOD LOVES YOU!

IT SAYS IN THE HOLY BIBLE THAT
"IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS
FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US
OUR SINS" (1 JOHN 1:9 KJV).



I THINK THE TIME IS RIGHT. HERE
IS A PRESENT FOR YOU—YOUR
VERY OWN COPY OF THE SACRED
SCRIPTURES!



THANK YOU, FATHER JOHN!

Hungry for the truth, Martin spent long hours reading through his Latin Bible. And one day he found a verse that stood out like a flash of light.

"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL
LIVE BY FAITH" (ROMANS
1:17 ESV).



HMM? I WONDER IF THAT MEANS THAT FAITH
ALONE CAN SAVE ME?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Story of Martin Luther

Part 2

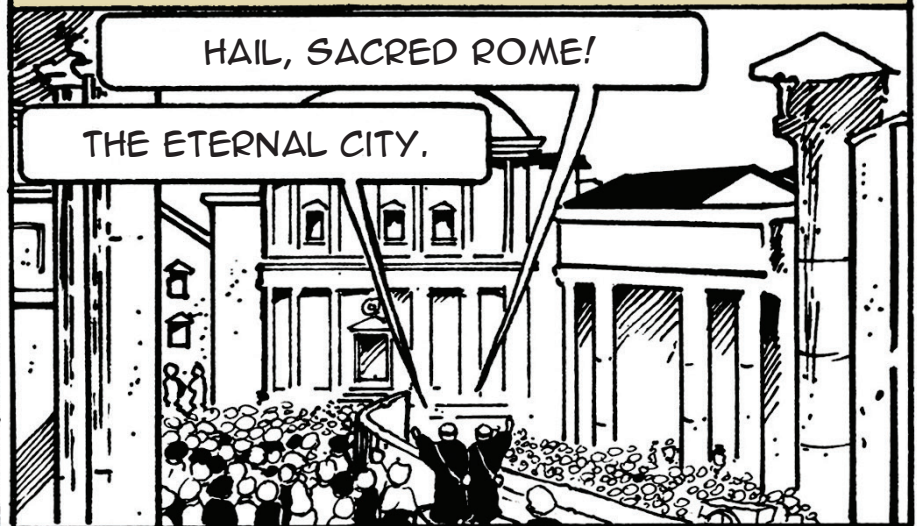
Martin was sent to teach at the university in Wittenberg, built by Duke Frederick of Saxony. The students were very interested in his lectures on the Bible. At that time only priests read the Bible.



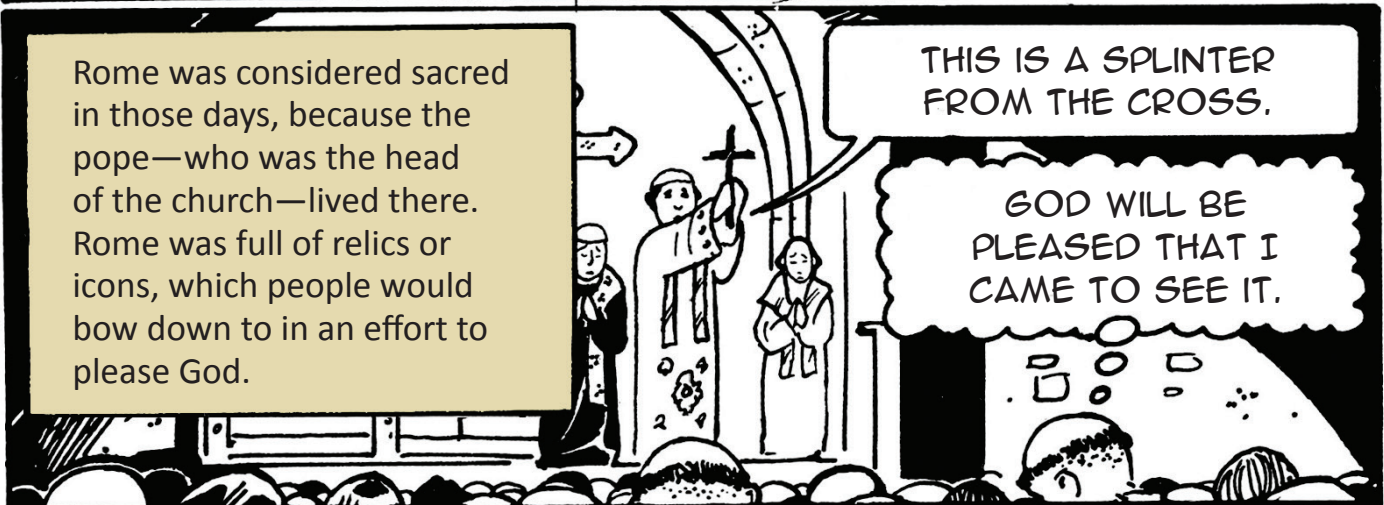
In 1510 Luther was sent on a mission to Rome.



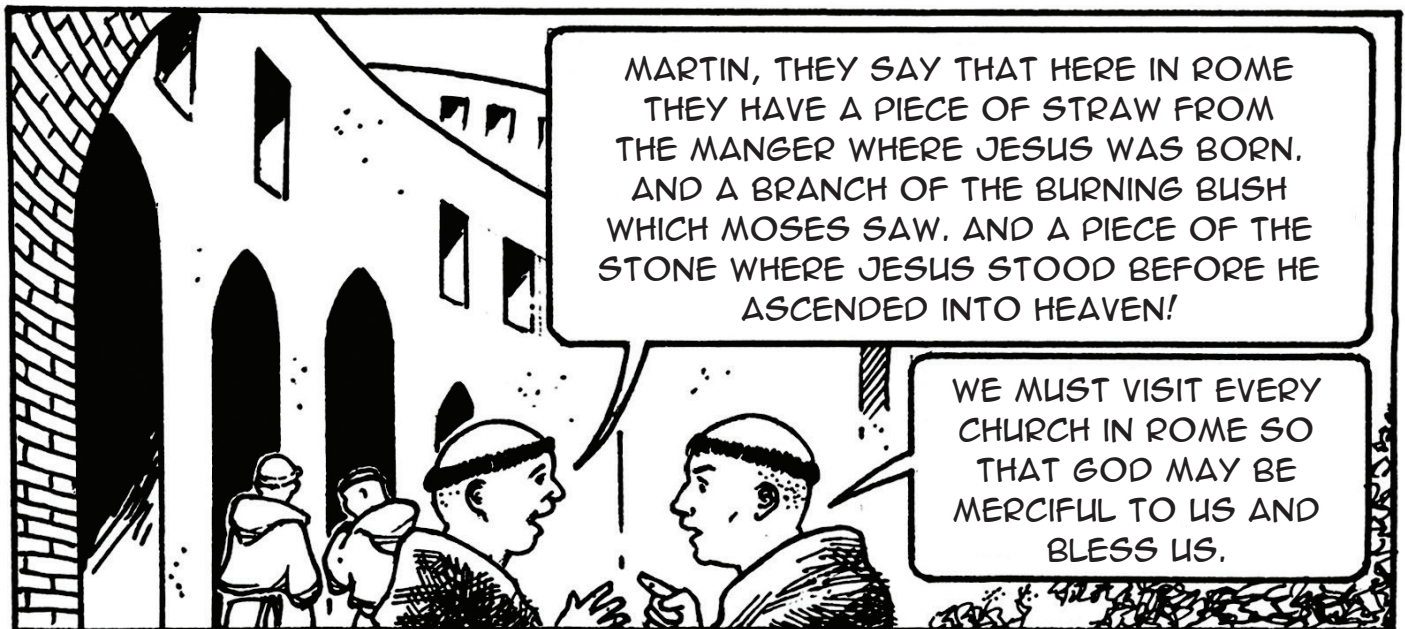
After six weeks of walking they finally arrived in Rome.



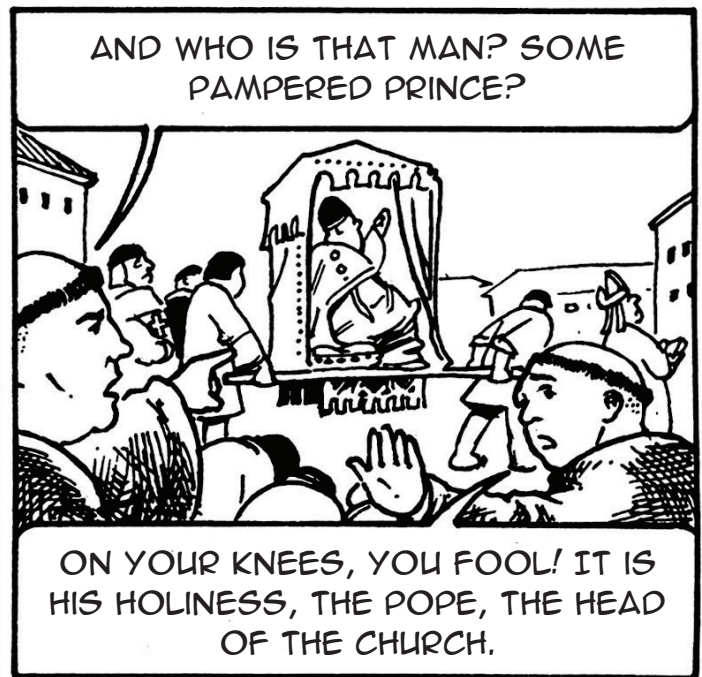
Rome was considered sacred in those days, because the pope—who was the head of the church—lived there. Rome was full of relics or icons, which people would bow down to in an effort to please God.



It was believed that visitors who paid to see these relics wouldn't have to suffer as long for their sins in purgatory, a kind of "waiting place" between heaven and hell where some believed people could work off their sins.



But Rome was far from being a "holy" city. Martin began hearing and seeing things that made him very sad and upset.



HIS HOLINESS, THE POPE!



LORD, FORGIVE ME.

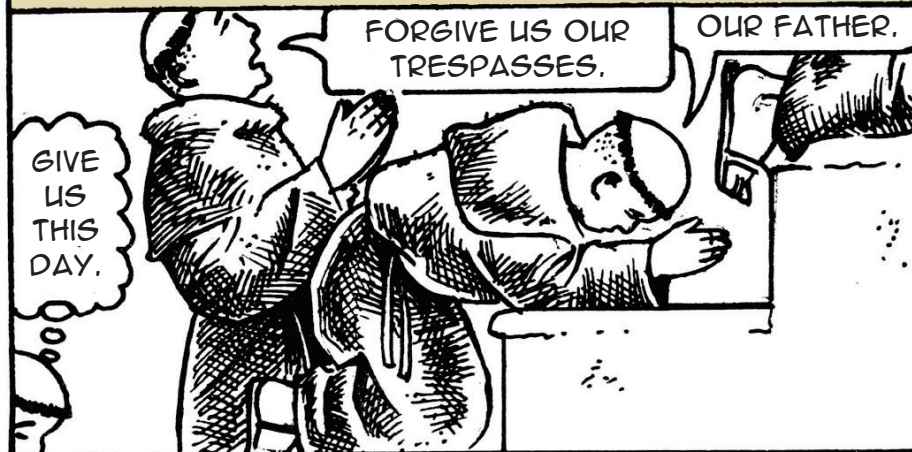


AND NOW WE MUST VISIT THE SACRED STEPS, THE HOLIEST PLACE IN ALL OF ROME.



According to tradition, these stairs had been transported to Rome and were supposedly the stairs on which Jesus stood outside of Pilate's palace. Pilgrims would climb them on their knees while praying that the time in purgatory would be lessened for the soul of a friend or relative.

But as Martin was climbing up the steps, he kept hearing a voice—



Back in Germany, Martin Luther continued teaching at the university and was granted the degree of Doctor of Theology.¹

¹ the study of religion

Yet he still wasn't certain about one of God's most important and simplest truths.

CONGRATULATIONS, DR. LUTHER.

THANK YOU, SIR.

One day, while on the toilet—

"FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH. AND THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE SHOULD BOAST" (EPHESIANS 2:8-9 ESV).

GRACE?

THEN SALVATION IS A GIFT! IT'S NOT EARNED BY DOING GOOD WORKS OR BY PRAYING TO THE SAINTS. I CAN BE SAVED SIMPLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

AMAZING!

I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN SPIRITUALLY BORN AGAIN!²

THIS SCRIPTURE HAS OPENED THE GATES OF PARADISE FOR ME! I LOVE YOU, LORD JESUS!

² JOHN 3:3-8

The next day at the university.

IF YOU PICTURE THE BIBLE AS A MIGHTY TREE
AND EVERY VERSE A LITTLE BRANCH, I HAVE
SHAKEN EVERY ONE OF THOSE BRANCHES, AND
I'VE COME TO A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY. ...



WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH, AND FAITH ALONE.
SALVATION IS A GIFT OF GOD AND NOT
SOMETHING WE CAN EARN THROUGH WORKS.

Martin began teaching how salvation from sin was a gift of God's grace, and many of his students believed. He would read them the Bible and then explain it to them in German, their own language.

GOD LOVES US SO MUCH THAT HE SENT HIS
SON, JESUS, TO DIE FOR US. AND JESUS
HAS PAID FOR ALL OF OUR SINS!

BUT WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT THAT
WE MUST BE GOOD IN ORDER
TO RECEIVE SALVATION FROM
OUR SINS SO WE COULD GO
TO HEAVEN.



THE BIBLE TELLS US SALVATION IS A GIFT: "THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL
LIFE THROUGH CHRIST JESUS" (ROMANS 6:23 ESV).

EVERY ONE OF YOU CAN KNOW
GOD FOR YOURSELF AND LOVE HIM
PERSONALLY.

OH, THAT'S
WONDERFUL!



AFTER A LONG DARK
NIGHT, A NEW DAY HAS
RISEN! WE MUST TELL
EVERYONE ABOUT THE
LOVE OF GOD!



And Martin Luther set out to do just that!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Story of Martin Luther

Part 3

In order to pay the huge expenses required to complete St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Pope Leo X authorized Johann Tetzel, a monk, to travel around Germany selling the forgiveness of sins to the people. He told them that anyone who gave enough money to the church could have their sins or the sins of their loved ones forgiven.

ONLY THE SAINTS GO STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN. SO IF YOU'RE NOT PERFECT, YOU WILL BE CONDEMNED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO SUFFER FOR YOUR SINS IN AN AWFUL PLACE CALLED PURGATORY!

THERE IS NO HOPE FOR ME!

IT'S THE MONK TETZEL.

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY TO ESCAPE THE TORMENT AND THE FLAMES OF PURGATORY AND GO STRAIGHT INTO HEAVEN?

ANYTHING YOU SAY!

HIS HOLINESS, THE POPE, HAS PROMISED FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO WILL BUY THESE LETTERS FROM HIM.

I'LL TAKE ONE! ER ... NO, TWO!

AS THE COIN IN THE COFFER RINGS, A SOUL FROM PURGATORY SPRINGS.

CLINK
COFFER

Melanchthon, Luther's friend and assistant, brought him the news.

A MONK NAMED TETZEL IS GOING AROUND SELLING FORGIVENESS OF SINS.



OUTRAGEOUS! SALVATION IS SO COSTLY THAT NONE OF US COULD AFFORD TO PAY FOR IT. BUT JESUS GAVE IT TO US FOR FREE.

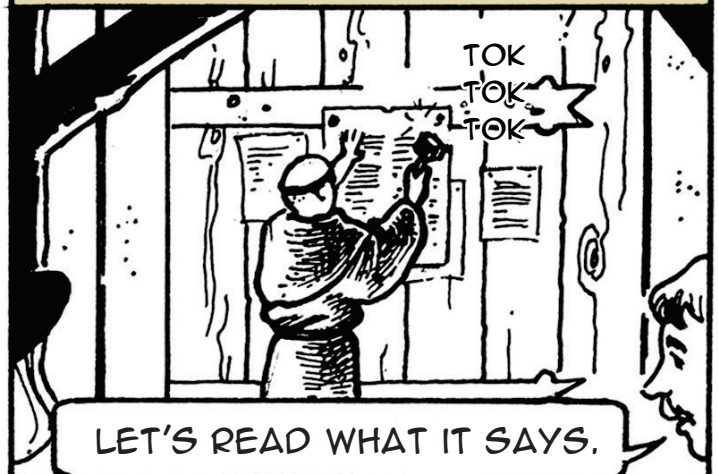
I'LL KNOCK A HOLE IN THE DRUM OF THAT PROUD MONK, TETZEL.



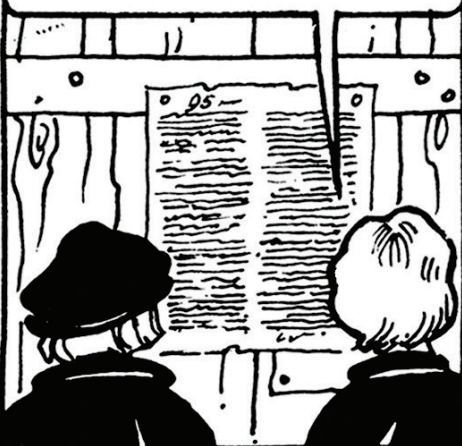
That night, Luther wrote a list of the reasons why the church can't ask man to pay for his salvation. He numbered each paragraph and they added up to 95.



The next day, October 31, 1517, Luther nailed the 95 paragraphs onto the door of the church.



IT SAYS THAT IT DOESN'T TAKE MONEY, GOOD WORKS, OR ANYTHING BUT FAITH TO GO TO HEAVEN!



MEN DON'T NEED TO BARGAIN WITH GOD FOR FORGIVENESS? IT'S FREE?!



THEY COULD PUT LUTHER TO DEATH FOR SAYING THIS!

These became known as the "95 Theses." They were soon translated, and in only four weeks printed copies spread throughout Europe, "as if the angels themselves were messengers," as one of Luther's friends put it.



The truth of God's Word continues to spread despite opposition.

Finally the news reached the pope.



THESE MUST BE THE WRITINGS OF A DRUNK GERMAN!

NO, YOUR HOLINESS. HE IS A PROFESSOR AND MANY PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING HIS TEACHINGS.



HOW DARE HE SAY I CAN'T FORGIVE SINS! BRING HIM TO ROME.



But rather than having Luther taken to Rome, Duke Frederick of Saxony, a powerful German prince, supported and protected him, and demanded that Luther be given a court trial in

Germany instead. At that time, Pope Leo X needed the duke's support, so he agreed to have Luther's trial be held in Germany.

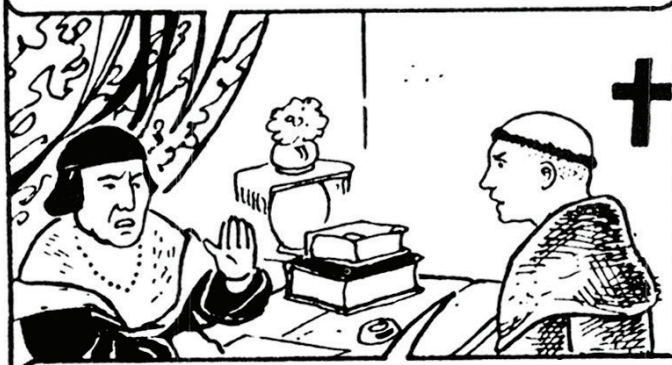
Several times Luther was called before high-ranking church leaders to see if he would change his mind.

DR. LUTHER, YOU MUST ADMIT THAT YOU ARE WRONG.



BUT I CAN PROVE THESE TEACHINGS BY WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

YOU WILL PROVE NOTHING! POPE LEO X SAYS THAT YOU ARE WRONG.



SIR, THE POPE IS NOT ABOVE, BUT UNDER, THE WORD OF GOD.

THE POPE SHOULD RETURN TO THE SIMPLICITY OF THE FIRST APOSTLES.



ENOUGH, LUTHER! I WARN YOU, SAY NO MORE!

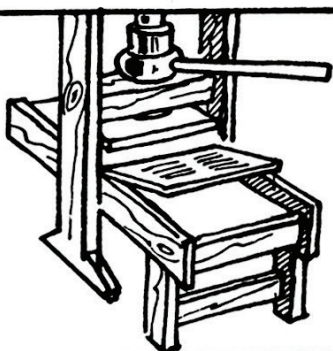
Back at the university, Luther continued to teach his newly discovered doctrines and he began to explain what God had showed him by writing many pamphlets, which were printed all over the Christian world.

DR. LUTHER, YOU MUST READ THIS LETTER FROM A YOUNG MONK IN ROME WHO SAYS THAT HE IS RISKING HIS LIFE TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR WRITINGS THROUGHOUT THE CITY.



THE WRITTEN WORD IS DOING THE JOB, MELANCHTHON.

THANK GOD FOR THE PRINTING PRESS,¹ GOD'S GREATEST GIFT TO MULTIPLY AND TO SPREAD HIS TRUTH!



¹ The printing press had been invented in 1440.

From that time on, Luther wrote a tremendous number of letters, pamphlets, sermons, and books, averaging one long writing every two weeks for the rest of his life. It was enough to fill 102 large books.



Luther regularly spent time in prayer.

WE ARE GOING TO BE BUSIER THAN EVER TODAY, SIR. I SUGGEST THAT WE CUT OUR PRAYER TIME IN HALF.



ON THE CONTRARY, MELANCHTHON.

TODAY WE HAVE SO MUCH TO DO THAT INSTEAD WE MUST DOUBLE OUR TIME IN PRAYER.



No wonder he accomplished so much for God.
He let God do it instead of trying to do things by himself.

Sometime later.

OH, MELANCHTHON,
IF ONLY WE COULD
PRAY THE WAY THIS
DOG WATCHES THIS
MORSEL OF MEAT:
ALL HIS THOUGHTS
CONCENTRATED ON
IT ALONE.

DR. LUTHER, A
LETTER FOR YOU.
IT'S FROM POPE
LEO X.

IT'S A WARNING.
HE SAYS I MUST
APOLOGIZE OR BE
EXCOMMUNICATED.²

POPE LEO X CALLS ME A REBEL AND TELLS ME TO
STOP PREACHING AND WRITING. GOD IS USING THOSE
WHO OPPOSE ME TO MAKE ME RAISE MY VOICE! I
MUST SPEAK, SHOUT, AND WRITE TILL THOSE WHO
WILL NOT BELIEVE HAVE HAD ENOUGH.

GULP.

² Not allowed to continue as
a member of the church.

I SUGGEST WE LIGHT
A BONFIRE AND BURN
THIS LETTER TOGETHER
WITH ALL THE RELIGIOUS
BOOKS THAT DON'T
PREACH THE TRUTH.

That night.

FAREWELL, RELIGIOUS BOOKS AND PAPERS
THAT DON'T TEACH THE TRUTH!

(TO BE CONTINUED...)

The Story of Martin Luther

Part 4

In 1519, Charles V was named emperor. In 1521 he decided there was to be a "Diet," a council meeting, in the town of Worms.¹ All the princes, dukes, and bishops of Germany would be gathered together to judge Martin Luther.

¹ Pronounced "vurms."

The cathedral at Worms

MARTIN, DON'T GO. THEY'RE AFTER YOUR LIFE.

I HAVE TO GO. I CAN'T BE A COWARD. I MUST REPLY TO THEIR FALSE CHARGES AND DELIVER MY SOUL AS A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH. (SEE EZEKIEL 3:17-19.)

I WOULD GO EVEN IF THERE WERE AS MANY DEVILS WAITING FOR ME IN WORMS AS THERE ARE TILES ON THE HOUSES THERE. I AM GOING FOR THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH.

That night.

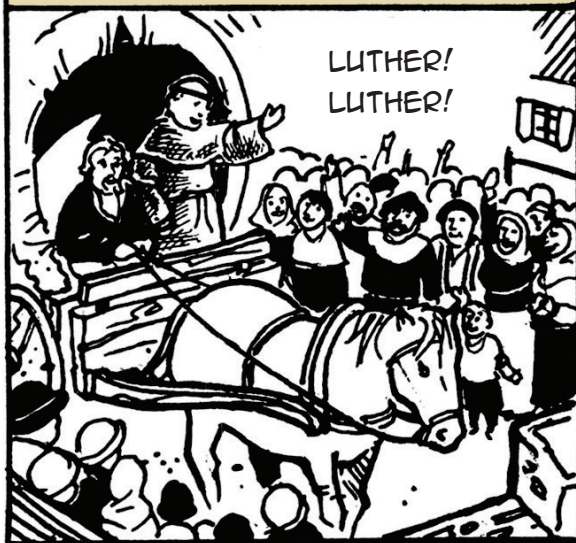
O LORD, STAND BY ME AGAINST ALL OF THE WORLD'S WISDOM. NOT MINE, BUT YOURS IS THE CAUSE; IT IS RIGHTEOUS AND ETERNAL.

I AM DRIVEN INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STORM.

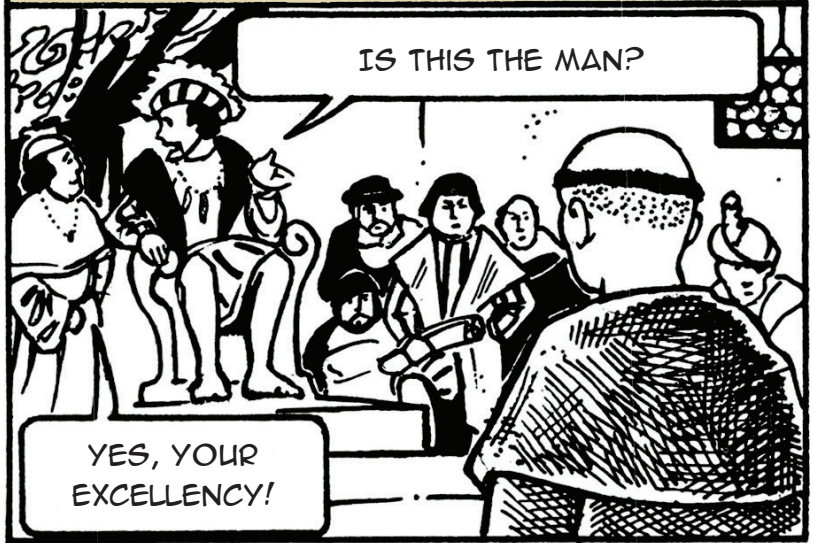
Luther traveled to Worms.



They entered Worms.



Luther appeared before the council.



ARE THOSE YOUR BOOKS?

INDEED THEY ARE!

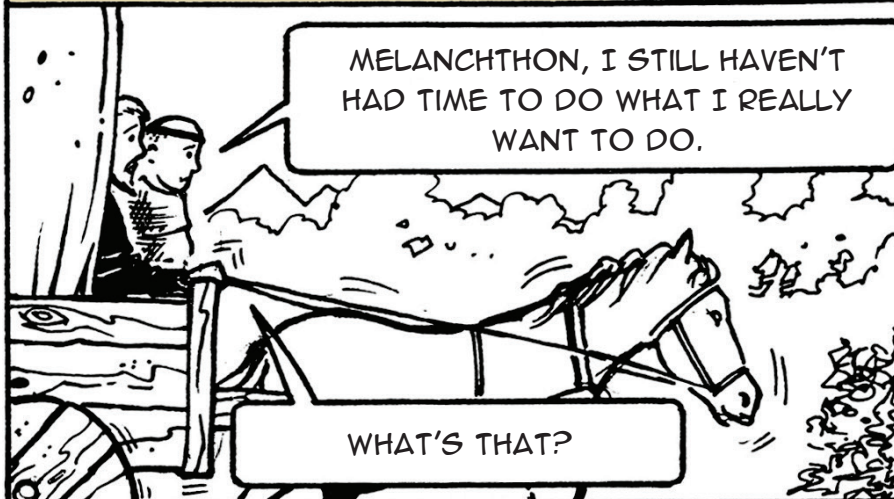


UNLESS I AM PROVEN WRONG BY THE SCRIPTURES, I AM CAPTIVE TO THE WORD OF GOD. HERE I STAND! I CAN DO NO OTHER. I'M WILLING TO DIE FOR THIS TRUTH, I'M SO SURE OF IT. SO HELP ME, GOD!

THEN YOU SHALL BE
BANNED FROM MY
EMPIRE.



From that moment his life was in extreme danger.
He started his journey home.



MELANCHTHON, I STILL HAVEN'T
HAD TIME TO DO WHAT I REALLY
WANT TO DO.

WHAT'S THAT?

TRANSLATE THE BIBLE
INTO GERMAN. THE
COMMON PEOPLE CAN'T
READ LATIN, AND YET
IT'S THE ONLY BIBLE
THEY'VE GOT.



IT'S A WONDERFUL
IDEA, MARTIN. MAYBE
SOMEDAY YOU'LL HAVE
THE TIME.



Suddenly.



WHERE'S LUTHER?

HERE.

TAKE HIM!
QUICKLY!



They disappeared again
into the dark forest.

MARTIN!

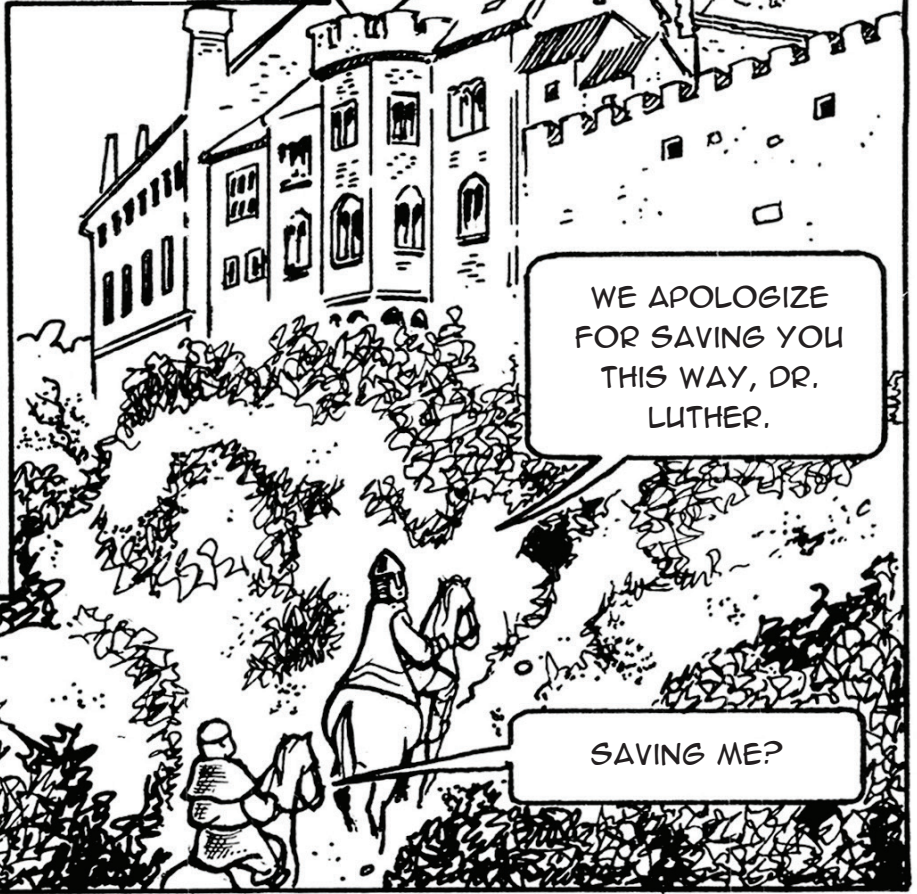


Rumors spread: The famed artist Albrecht Dürer said:

Luther was taken to a large fortified castle.



O GOD, IF LUTHER IS DEAD, WHO WILL EXPLAIN TO US THE GOSPEL?



WE APOLOGIZE FOR SAVING YOU THIS WAY, DR. LUTHER.

SAVING ME?

YES, DUKE FREDERICK THE WISE SENT US TO SAVE YOU FROM THE POPE'S MEN.

AND HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO STAY HERE?

A FEW MONTHS, PERHAPS EVEN A YEAR. BUT THERE MUST BE SOME WORK, SOME WRITING, YOU WANT TO DO. THIS IS THE TIME TO GET ON WITH IT.

This time of hiding was no doubt ordained of God, for there Martin translated the New Testament into German, the language of the people. He worked fast, and in only eleven weeks he finished.



THE BIBLE! I CAN TRANSLATE THE BIBLE INTO GERMAN.

It was also a time of great battles with Satan. One night...



HA! HA! HA!



LOOK AT THIS LONG LIST OF YOUR SINS, MARTIN LUTHER!

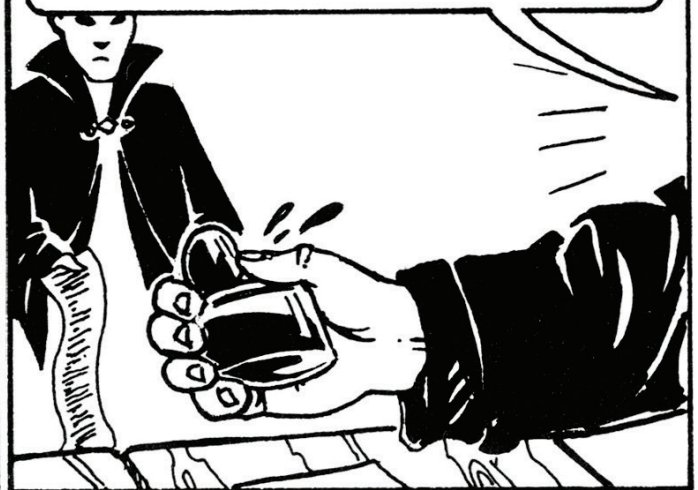


Luther read them one by one.

IT'S ALL TRUE, BUT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ONE THING...



"THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN" (1 JOHN 1:7 ESV).



I REBUKE YOU, SATAN, IN JESUS' NAME!



In 1525, Luther married Katharina von Bora, a former nun, and together they lived in an old monastery given to them by the duke. It was always crowded with visitors who came to listen to him.



Luther had six children and adopted many more. He was always talking, reading, and preaching, and his students would take notes of everything he said.



Though Martin Luther himself was often ill during his last few years, he worked with tireless energy to the end, preaching, traveling, founding schools, and writing.

MUSIC IS THE GREATEST GIFT. INDEED, IT IS DIVINE! IT PUTS TO FLIGHT ALL SAD THOUGHTS!

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN A SOOTHING MELODY TO CALM ONE'S SPIRIT.



MARTIN, HOW CAN WE TAKE IN ANOTHER ORPHAN? WE ALREADY HAVE TOO MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN THE HOUSE.

DON'T WORRY, DEAR. FOR EVERY ADDITIONAL MOUTH, GOD WILL PROVIDE. TELL THE MAN TO BRING THE CHILD IN.



GO TO SLEEP, DEAR LITTLE BOY. I HAVE NO GOLD TO GIVE YOU, BUT A RICH GOD.



Then on February 18, 1546, after a full life, he went to be with the Lord.



The End