

# The King's Highway

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### The Freedom Luther Found

October 27th. is Reformation Sunday and throughout the world Protestants will commemorate the 440 anniversary of the day Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral.

Born in Eisleben, Saxony, Nov. 10. 1483, of pious, industrious parents, Martin Luther was to become one of history's men of destiny. At the age of 20 he obtained the Master of Arts degree and began to study law. The sudden death of a companion, by accident or violence, made a deep impression on his mind, and, at a later time, during a walk in the fields, young Luther was overtaken by a violent electrical storm, and there decided to enter a monastery. Over the protests of his father, he kept his vow and entered a monastery at Erfurt.

In the cloistered life Luther sought for peace of soul in the ceremonies, sacrifices, and penance of the church, but all to no avail. During the second year of seclusion, he came across a Latin Bible in the library and began to study it, praying that he might have understanding. During the course of his study, he was led to read the epistle to the Galatians and to discover that salvation by faith, and faith alone, was the clear teaching of God's Word. He began to preach this doctrine at once and his fame spread far and wide. "This monk", exclaimed Martin Polichius, a doctor of law and medicine, "will confound all the doctors, will exhibit new doctrines, and reform the whole Roman Church; for he is intent on reading the writings of the prophets and apostles, and he depends on the Word of Jesus Christ; this, neither the philosophers, nor the sophists can subvert".

For years Luther continued in the Roman Catholic church, preaching the doctrine of justification by faith and leading many into the knowledge of salvation. He also preached against indulgences, purgatory, the infallibility of the pope, and other subjects which brought protests and condemnation from church authorities. But to these Luther replied: "If the cause I defend be not the work of God, I would have nothing to do with it; let it perish. Let Him alone have glory to Whom glory belongs". "If in obedience to God I lose my life, what is the loss of a few hours? Sufficient for me is the lovely Redeemer and Advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, whose praise I will sing as long as I live".

Already excommunicated by the pope as an incorrigible heretic, Luther was called before the Diet (Parliament) of Worms and King Charles V, of Germany and Spain. There, standing before imperial and papal authority, he refused to retract and made his famous statement: "Here I stand, God help me, I can do no other". He was condemned by the Diet in a formal edict, but it became little more than a dead letter because of the king's fear of a religious war.

"In October, 1524, Luther flung off the monastic habit", and the next year married Catherine von Bora, who had been a nun. Forced to give up the hope of reform within the Roman Catholic church, Luther launched on a stormy

career of spiritual service which was destined, under God, to produce the Protestant Church. He went forth to herald the message of Christian liberty as set forth in the epistle to the Galatians, "the Magna Carta of the Christian Church". "The just shall live by faith" was Luther's battle cry, a cry that has been the call to liberty for countless thousands. The freedom which Luther found, the freedom which constitutes the message of true Protestantism and the Gospel includes:

#### (1) Freedom from the Dominion of Papal and Human Authority.

The Roman Church was, and is, under the supreme spiritual jurisdiction of the pope. His word is law, supposedly based on infallible judgment, law to be enforced by the cardinals, archbishops, and priests.

"The distinctive feature of the 16th. century Reformation was the revolt against the very idea of one supreme (human) authority". Doubleday Encycl. It was a revolt against spiritual dictatorship.

"The whole position of the medieval church (Roman) rested on the assumption that the Church was the Divinely-appointed intermediary between God and man. The Lutheran, or Protestant position, rests on the idea of direct personal relations between God and the individual". Doubleday Encycl. We need not come to God through man, we need not confess our sins to man, we must not put our trust in man. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" I Timothy 2:5. Freed from enslavement to man's opinion, man's authority, we come to Him, trust in Him, are saved by Him.

#### (2) Freedom from the Delusion of Salvation by Good Works

In the monastery Luther gave himself to prayer, penance, and various sacrificial religious exercises, in a vain hope of finding peace and soul rest. And in the church of to-day, Catholic and Protestant, many rest in the hope that they will be saved through their own efforts and virtues.

Said Luther: "They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God adorned with virtues and merits; which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this opinion, or rather, this mistake; so was I: but now I am fighting against this error . . ." "And this is the confidence of Christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours, because they are laid on Him, 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world' ". A lady of nobility, hearing Luther preach a sermon on this theme, said: "If I could hear such another sermon, I should die in peace". Within a month the lady was stricken with a fatal illness and died rejoicing in the faith of salvation through Christ alone.

#### (3) Freedom from the Depression of Sins' Burden and Bondage.

The fear which gripped Luther at the time of his

(Continued on Page 8)