

As Leo came in that day from hunting, a man stepped up to him and said excitedly, "Your holiness, look at this!" The pope asked, "What is it?" The man said, "It is a paper that a German monk has written." Leo glanced at it. In surprise he said: "That German writes pretty good Latin." He handed it back and walked on. But the members of his court realized that something serious had happened.

Soon the pope himself began to realize that the situation was becoming serious. The funds began to drop off, as Germans stopped buying the indulgences. Leo needed the money to maintain his way of life; so he gave his staff permission to start procedures to stop Luther's activities.

The next few years display the marvelous courage of Martin Luther. Although he had been a simple man of the people, his heart was fixed upon a great Biblical truth and nothing could shake him from it. Facing the tremendous power of the pope and of various earthly potentates who were determined to destroy him, he kept his eyes on God and determined to march straight forward, following Biblical teaching unmoved by any thought of personal danger. As a result of the political situation, Luther was not immediately attacked. Various measures were taken to compel him to retract what he had said. Luther would only too gladly have engaged in debate and discussions at any time, but most of the efforts made against him were simply orders that he submit to the authority of the church. During the months that intervened Luther studied the sources of church authority, and was surprised to see at how many points the mediaeval church had moved away from Scriptural teaching. As his thought was clarified he became more and more determined to follow as God should lead regardless of the results to himself.

In the fall of 1520 a new emperor came to the throne. By this time the pope had excommunicated Luther and the pope's representatives asked the emperor to condemn him. Frederick the Wise, the ruler of electoral Saxony, who had been the administrator of the empire during the period before the election of Charles V, asked the emperor not to move too rapidly. He said, "Surely you will not start your reign by destroying a man without first giving him a hearing." Charles agreed to permit Luther to appear before him to answer the charges. Frederick then requested that Luther be given a safe conduct to travel across Germany to Worms, to appear at the great assemblage of rulers of the various portions of the empire, and to return safely to Wittenberg. Charles signed a statement giving an ample period of time in which it was guaranteed that he would not be seized or injured in any way. After this period the emperor would be free, of course, to take such measures as he might desire.

When the messenger arrived in Wittenberg with the safe conduct Luther's friends urged him not to go. They said, "A century ago in Prague in Bohemia," (which is now a part of Czechoslovakia) "John Huss taught what you are now teaching, and the Emperor Sigismund gave him a safe conduct to go to the council at Constance. At Constance

a great man, not to be a monk." Luther said, "I wish to obey my parents, but my loyalty to the Lord is superior to my loyalty to my parents. I must find some way of dealing with my sin."

Luther knew that his life was far below the standard that God demands. He knew that a righteous God could not receive him unless he could find a way to remedy his sin, so he went into the Augustinian convent.

Entering the convent, Luther was determined to find relief from his sin. He joyfully underwent every humiliation that the older monks might put upon him. Some of these men who were lazy and ignorant delighted in giving the young novice humiliating tasks to perform, but he did them gladly, so anxious was he that his soul should be saved. They made him go through the town with a bag, gathering gifts for the monastery. At houses where formerly he had come as a welcome guest at the front door he now knocked at the back door. Luther was highly embarrassed by it all, but he willingly submitted to everything if only he could find peace in his soul. Night after night he lay on the floor of his cell, praying constantly that God would give him peace. Yet he found no peace.

A century ago all our churches in America preached the problem of sin and the need of salvation. Today it is a note that has largely disappeared. Leaders in the World Council of Churches rarely mention it. Sin has been pushed out of the door. It is considered to be merely human imperfection. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed. Many a minister has been brainwashed in a modernist seminary into believing that sin is merely a weakness or a misunderstanding.

For many weeks Luther struggled with this problem without finding an answer. Then Staupitz, the head of the German branch of the Augustinian order, visited the monastery and inquired regarding the spiritual condition of its members. He was told that a bright young fellow who had entered the monastery that year was showing a morbid streak. He was always talking about his sin. "Instead of getting his night's sleep," they said, "he lies on the floor praying to God, telling over his beads, and talking about his sin." Staupitz talked to Luther. He said, "Luther, do you believe the Apostles' Creed?" Luther answered, "Of course I do; I believe everything that the Church teaches." Staupitz continued, "The Apostles' Creed says, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin.' Do you believe in the forgiveness of sin?" Luther said, "Yes, it's in the creed, so of course I believe it." "Well, then," he said, "why don't you take it? It's there. Why don't you simply accept it?"

Now, that is salvation by faith. One does not have to go through forms and ceremonies. One cannot earn his way to heaven, no matter what he does. It is only by receiving forgiveness of sin as a free gift by virtue of what Jesus Christ did on Calvary's cross that anyone can be saved.

In some of our evangelical churches we may perhaps