

THE BOY LUTHER

Do you remember how Samuel heard the voice of God in the night-time? As Samuel tried to sleep, he asked God to “speak for thy servant heareth?” Well, there is another little boy that you should know about who also heard the voice of God speaking to him.

This boy was born in Germany on Nov. 10, 1483. That's over 500 years ago. His mother and father gave him the name “Martin,” because he was born on the eve, or evening, before St. Martin's day.

His father was called John Luther, and his mother's name was Margaret Luther. They were poor peasants. Martin's father was a miner working in the local mountains digging for copper. Though poor, John Luther believed in hard work and reading books. He read and reread the few books he could afford. He prospered a little owning and working two furnaces for the copper trade. Mr. and Mrs. Luther were proud parents and hopeful that their boy, Martin, would go to school, learn well and one day become a lawyer.

As a boy, Martin Luther had some very hard times. On one occasion his mother whipped him until his blood flowed. All because he had stolen a hazel nut. His teacher at school was a very stern school-master, who thought that **“nothing could be learned without a free use of the rod”**. So, the teacher was very cruel to all the boys and girls in the class and during one single morning the angry teacher whipped Martin 15 times for no good reason (He later referred to that school as his purgatory!).

At age 14 Martin was sent to another school in the town of Eisenach, Germany. Along with many of the other students there, he had to beg for his food, and look out for his own places to sleep. He would sing as a minstrel to collect money or scraps of food.

In God's goodness Martin was taken into the home of a Mrs. Cotta, who cared for Martin. He ate at her table and learned good manners and he was introduced to people who liked to help him.

At age 18 he went to the University of Erfurt. Martin was happy there and he was a very good student.

At age 20 he found something that would forever change his life. Like his father, the young Luther was fond of books, so he went to the library and for the first time set his eyes on a Bible. It was in Latin.

A whole new world of truth opened up to him. He learned about God being holy and he also learned that due to his own sins he was unholy in God's eyes, and so he began to be fearful of God and hate his sins.

To add to his fears a friend died very suddenly, that made him think of his own death and wether he would go to heaven or hell. Another time he was cut very badly by a scythe that he was carrying over his shoulder, so that his leg bled terribly. Then he was out in an open field when a thunder and lightening storm crashed around him. At that time he prayed to St. Ann, a supposed patron saint. To her Martin cried out for safety. He vowed that if God spared his life he would become a monk, and he did. He gave up every other opportunity in life and entered the severe life of a monk dwelling day and night in stone built monastery, to find peace with God.

Life in the Augustinian monastery was not what he hoped for. It was certainly not like heaven. There he was plagued with really bad thoughts. He felt so unclean before a holy God, that he hated himself for not being truly good.

He felt bad about himself and was filled with shame. You know what shame is! It is a burst of guilt when you know deep inside that you did wrong. Martin Luther felt this shame in his heart

all the time and he couldn't find relief. He could never feel happy about himself. How could he feel happy with himself when he knew that God was angry with him all the time.

To try to feel better about himself even in the monastery, he fasted, eating no food for days. He wore a rough itchy garment next to his skin to torture himself. The church called this torture penance. Martin Luther also prayed and prayed so much that he went for weeks without sleep. Martin however, didn't do well in the monastery, he felt more and more condemned before God, who as the Bible teaches will judge all forms of sin.

Then Martin Luther was given a teaching position at a new university. He was to teach theology. A friend got him the appointment so that he might be forced to study the Bible.

The verse which God used to open the eyes of Martin Luther was **Romans 1:17. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."**

God brought Martin Luther to understand that we cannot get to heaven by trying to make yourself good. In that Bible text, Martin discovered that salvation is a gift from God through God's own Son.

He learned from that wonderful Bible text that the righteousness or right living of the Lord Jesus covers over a man's filthy sins.

Later in life as a preacher, Martin Luther explained his new found joy in salvation snow covering a dunghill. Every farm has a dunghill where the manure and filth of the animals is stored up in a pile. That dunghill is smelly, ugly, and horrible to look at. The dunghill is like our sins which God cannot look at. But even a dunghill can be made look clean and beautiful when it is covered in pure white snow.

So, when we have the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, the righteousness of the Lord covers over all our sins. Then sinners who are covered in the white righteousness of the Lord Jesus are accepted by God as clean and beautiful in His sight. That way God is well pleased with us, and we are fitted to live with God in heaven.

Everyone needs to be washed from sin by the blood of Jesus and everyone needs to be covered in the white righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

So we sing the song:.

Whiter than the snow, Whiter than the snow.

Wash me in the blood of the Lamb, and I shall be whiter than snow.

We need to do more than sing that song, we need to believe on the Lord and pray that he covers us in His beautiful white righteousness to make us white as snow. Then we are fit for heaven.

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