

great underlying principle of *justification by faith* was to him one of the deep and hidden things of God. The noble Staupitz and the good old monk already before him, knew as much as Luther had now learned, and more. And all this Luther himself might have known, and yet lived a monk all his days. But God had greater things in store for him, and greater lessons to teach him. All this and more he might have taught life-long, with the burning zeal of a Paul, and the commanding eloquence of an Apollos, without causing the foundation of Rome to tremble, or freeing the Church from a single fetter or chain, and without even enjoying, himself, the liberty of the children of God, or the blessings of full trust and full salvation. Mark what follows.

The assassination of the dear Alexis had awakened him. The thunder-bolt on the Erfurth road struck the death-blow of his indecision, and Staupitz and the good monk with his *credo* and his faith, had shed the first rays and comforts of salvation upon his pathway. This was all they could do. For all this God used them, but now He was about to make His own Holy Word the means of leading Luther out into the light, and onward into the open field of truth, not yet reached by either the prelate or the monk. Luther had no Bible. He had access to one, in Latin, chained to a stone-pillar in the convent—a striking emblem of the Bible at that day. Locked up in a dead language, and chained to a cold monastic pillar of dead stone; and yet, thank God! neither itself dead nor yet bound. Another Bible he could see, also in the Latin, by going to the library of the university to read it. That was the first copy of the Bible he ever saw; and the first word of the Bible he ever read, from the Bible itself, was the story of Hannah and her child Samuel lent to the Lord for ever—and this charmed him. Yet another copy of the sacred Word was within his reach, by going to a brother monk's cell to read it, in Latin also. A Bible all his own, was a prize too great for his fondest dreams. And yet God gave him one. Staupitz brought him a Bible, a Latin Bible, and presented it to him to be all his own. Oh, what a treasure! How eagerly he searched it! What delight it gave him! That was the first stone of his great work. That Latin Bible was all his own, and he, albeit he knew it not, was called of God, and was yet to undo the Latin bolts and bars, and break in sunder the monastic chains, and give a good honest German liberty to the blessed Word of God, and bring home its hallowed light to thousands of darkened hearths and homes, and to millions of benighted souls. He himself was first to learn from it the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of peace, and then to become the foremost Bible teacher of the world.

We will now trace the steps of his final and full freedom of soul through faith in the Lord Jesus. One day, while studying Romans for a lecture to the students, the words of the prophet Habakkuk as quoted by Paul, Rom. i. 17—“*The just shall live by faith,*” struck their light through his soul. Here was the grand principle of life and righteousness. He saw it, grasped it, exulted in it, and began teaching it with all the force and fire of his eloquence and genius. There were, it is true, applications of this great principle which he was not yet prepared to see, or to make, both to the Church and to his own heart and life.

But the *principle* of justification by faith was no longer a hidden one to him, and it infused a new life and a new power into his soul and his teachings. He applied it with sunbeam clearness to the forgiveness of sins. He saw how God could be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus, however great his sins might be. Selected not long after to represent seven convents in matters of difference between them and the Vicar-General, at the court of the Roman Pontiff, he set off, led by the hand of God into Rome itself, to witness with his own eyes and ears the blasphemous hollowness and putrid corruptions of the Church. On the way he was again taken ill, and