

LutherFacts #6



Image: "Luther at Erfurt", which depicts Martin Luther discovering the doctrine of *sola fide*. Painting by [Joseph Noel Paton](#), 1861.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Noel_Paton)

Some journeys in life take time. They may at first fail to take us to where we want to go. Such could be said was the case with Martin Luther. After his encounter with the thunderstorm, he withdrew from his legal studies at the University of Erfurt and joined the Augustinian monastery. However, historian Martin Marty has documented that he did this in a troubled state of mind. It appears that he was still not clear as to the meaning of his actions. His own words, spoken at a farewell gathering with friends, suggest that he was unsure what was to come next: "This day you see me, and then, not ever again." At this point, Luther envisions his fate as one entering a prison.

The implications of that comment held true for the first years of Martin Luther's life as a monk. He later reported even losing "touch with Christ the Savior and Comforter, and [having] made of him the jailer and hangman of my poor soul." Luther also found himself "hating" God for placing him in such a situation with no way out. Then, in the midst of such torment, his study of the Pauline letters caused him to embrace the freedom that Christ, through the resurrection, offered to all humanity. At this point, a new purpose emerged within Luther. His future becomes one based on hope and the possibility of change. His journey into a prison became instead a pathway to reform and eventually the regeneration of the medieval church.