

Our Reformation Confidence – “God Is Our Refuge and Strength!”

- I. We trust God to deliver us from our sin and guilt.
- II. We trust God to deliver us from our present problems.
- III. We trust God to bring us to eternal peace in heaven.

Dear Christian friends,

Psalm 46 inspired Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” This psalm **is also** a nice summary of what the Reformation was and is REALLY ALL ABOUT. **Psalm 46** is a psalm of CONFIDENT TRUST in God’s grace and **mercy** – His power and **promises**. Psalm 46 reveals OUR REFORMATION CONFIDENCE – **“God is our refuge and strength!”** With Reformation confidence WE TRUST GOD 1)to deliver us from our sin and **guilt**, 2)to **deliver us** from our present problems and 3)to bring us to eternal peace in heaven.

I. To deliver us from our sin and guilt.

Deliverance from sin and guilt. That’s what Luther was looking for. Luther had learned well God’s LAW. He really understood GOD’S **holiness** and **righteousness** and HIS OWN sin and **guilt**. Luther knew God as his RIGHTEOUS JUDGE but not as his GRACIOUS SAVIOR. Luther saw Jesus on the cross – but he didn’t see it as we do. **For Luther** the cross was look what MY SINS DID to Jesus – **not look what** JESUS DID with my sins. Luther didn’t find peace and comfort at Jesus’ cross just the dreadful fear of **standing before** Jesus HIS JUDGE. So as he was taught Luther TURNED to Mary and the saints for their help – he fasted and **beat** his body – he became a monk – he tried to live up to GOD’S **commandments** and the CHURCH’S **rules**. But he had no peace – NO CONFIDENCE of God’s **love** and **forgiveness**.

Shortly before he died Luther scribbled a note PART in German and part in Latin – **“Hoc est verum – wir sind alle Bettler”** – “this is true – we are all beggars.” Before God we are **nothing** but BEGGARS! We didn’t come “into the presence of God” this morning PRETTY PROUD of ourselves – confessing that we are BASICALLY GOOD, **decent** people. We didn’t point out to God ALL THE PROGRESS we **made last week** in cleaning up our lives. We didn’t come asking God for a LITTLE MORE **time** and **patience** because we really are trying to be good Christians. We confessed – AS GOD’S WORD reveals – “I am **by nature** sinful – I have **disobeyed** You in **my** thoughts, words and actions – I have done what is evil and failed to do what is right – I **deserve** Your punishment both now and in eternity.” Take a HARD, HONEST LOOK at yourself in that mirror of God’s law and see yourself as God sees you without Jesus. There’s nothing pretty about us! **“Wir sind alle Bettler”** – BEGGARS!

As Luther studied and taught the Bible at the **University of Wittenberg** he came to know the TRUTH of the gospel – that **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help”** even with our sins! Guilty as we are and so deserving of God’s wrath and rejection the gospel proclaims that **“the LORD Almighty is with us”** and FOR us. We truly are BEGGARS but look what God has ALL DONE and GIVEN us in Jesus!

“Come and see the works of the LORD!” Go kneel at that manger in Bethlehem – God’s own **“Son, born of a woman”** to be our all-sufficient Savior. Watch and rejoice AS JESUS LIVES a **life perfect** in every way and then gives us all the credit for it. Go stand at Calvary’s cross and behold the AMAZING GRACE of God that **“He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.”** Look WHAT JESUS DID with **our sin** at the cross! He washed us clean in His shed blood – He fully paid for **every single one** of our sins. Take to heart that triumphant cry, **“It is finished!”** – Jesus has taken care of **everything**. We don’t add anything to what Jesus has already done. Take another GOOD LOOK at Jesus’ empty grave and rest assured – we have a RISEN, LIVING Savior who shares with us

His Easter victory over death, the devil and hell. **“Wir sind alle Bettler”** – BEGGARS – but what priceless gifts GOD GIVES us **through** the gospel – Jesus as our Savior – forgiveness full and free – peace with God – a whole new life as God’s **dear children** – the privilege of prayer – the comfort of God’s promises – eternal life in heaven the **very moment** we die. Having Jesus as our Savior we are the RICHEST – most blessed beggars in the world! Our REFORMATION CONFIDENCE is that we trust God to deliver us from our sin and guilt.

II. To deliver us from our present problems.

Being a redeemed, beloved child of God is not the promise of an EASY life. **Actually**, it’s the opposite! Being a Christian faithful to God and His Word will bring MORE troubles to us. Look again at that OT reading – those three men in the **“fiery furnace.”** Read again what Jesus said in the gospel reading. Look again at the lives of the **prophets** and **apostles** – of Jesus! – of **Luther** and the other reformers. PUBLICLY stand up for **what God says** and **wants** and see the reaction you get today from the world and **sometimes** even from **family** and **friends**.

We also have all the **hassles** and **hardships** of life now in a fallen world. **Some** of those problems can be SO TRAUMATIC and **devastating** it can feel as if the whole world is CRASHING DOWN around us. That’s the picture here - **“though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”** That’s a picture of TOTAL UPHEAVAL and **chaos** – of life OUT OF CONTROL. Have you had some days like that?

But there’s no need to FEAR or PANIC or WORRY. Our Reformation confidence is that God will deliver us from our present problems. **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear... The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”**

Find real comfort and CONFIDENCE in those truths! God is **“our refuge”** – we flee to God for SAFETY. **“Our strength”** – God gives us the strength we NEED TO HANDLE whatever. **“Our fortress”** – literally HIGH PLACE. Picture a castle ON TOP a **high mountain inaccessible** to the raging **enemies down below**. This is God saying to you and me, “I’m HERE for you! **Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you.**” This is Jesus promising us that **“no one can snatch us out of His hand.”**

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.” A city under attack needs a CLEAN, SAFE, ADEQUATE supply of water. A city cut off from water will EVENTUALLY be defeated. This is a picture of God MORE THAN ADEQUATELY providing for all our **spiritual needs** through the means of grace – the GOSPEL in Word and Sacraments. Or to use the picture of Psalm 23, **“the green pastures and quiet waters”** of the gospel.

Oh treasure and faithfully use those **precious** means of grace! Through DAILY DEVOTIONS and weekly worship let God refresh your **soul** – strengthen your **faith** – ready you for LIFE and BATTLE in the world. As Satan bombards you with one temptation after another – as the world beckons with its **empty treasures** and **godless ways** – as your sinful nature fights you **every step** of **every day** – as a guilty conscience nags you **with thoughts** that God DOESN’T LOVE you and WON’T FORGIVE you – DRINK DEEPLY of the gospel – cling tightly to all those **blessings God gave** you in Holy Baptism – come often to this FEAST of Jesus true body and blood **“given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”** Our Reformation confidence is that we trust God to deliver us from all our present problems.

III. To bring us to eternal peace in heaven.

“The earth giving way, the mountains falling into the heart of the sea, etc.” NOT ONLY picture major problems now they also describe Judgment Day and the end of this present world. Peter wrote

that, ***“On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up.”*** Revelation shows us the ***“new heavens and new earth.”*** We will be hearing much more on that in the coming weeks so we won't go INTO DETAIL now. It's also so beautiful – PRECIOUS – COMFORTING.

Our Reformation confidence is that we trust God to bring us to ETERNAL PEACE in heaven. Our confidence is based on God's PROMISES and His PAST DELIVERANCES of His people in their times of need and distress. We see God deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt – from the oppression of the **Philistines** and **other** countries – from exile in Babylon. We see God watching over and **apostles** and **Paul** and the **early church** in the Book of Acts. **We see it** in the life of Luther. TIME AND AGAIN God proves His faithfulness to His promises – He delivers His people from ENEMIES TOO BIG for them to handle. He remains ***our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.***

So with Reformation confidence we LOOK FORWARD to the ultimate fulfillment of ***“He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.”*** With Reformation confidence we look forward to the ultimate fulfillment of ***“I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*** The day is surely coming when ***“at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”***

And in the meantime – in ALL THE TURMOIL and **upheaval** of life now – we hear God say, ***“Be still, and know that I am God.”*** That's God rebuking the WICKED and rebellious. He will have the LAST WORD, not them. That's God telling us to BE PATIENT – to TRUST His promises – His plans – His timing. He WILL COME THROUGH for us at just the right time. AS WE WAIT and deal with life now our Reformation confidence is that ***“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.”*** Amen.

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