

Andrew K. Frey End Times 1—Reformation Sunday
Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹² I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

¹⁶ At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV 84)

There are times when you want to be alone. Like when you are trying to get some work done, when you need to concentrate on something, or when you desperately need to get in a nap. But there are plenty of times when we don't want to be alone. Like when you are fighting a battle, standing trial, or sick and close to dying. At times like that you want people by your side. You want soldier to fight with you, you want lawyers and character witnesses to help you out, you want doctors, nurses to cure you, or friends and family to keep you company.

At times it may seem as if you are all alone in this world when you don't want to be. You face many hardships and difficulties in your life; and it may seem as if you face them by yourself. Or perhaps you are attacked for sharing your faith, or simply because you are a Christian. And it's more than people in the internet complaining about you. It's friends or family who don't really want anything to do with you, it's your co-workers who try to avoid you so they don't want to have a religious conversation with you; or the government is trying to pass laws that make it illegal to teach parts of the Truth. And it seems as if you have to face this persecution all by yourself. Sure, you know

2 Timothy 4:9-18

Holy Cross, Standish, MI.

November 2, 2014

that others are suffering through the same thing—but that doesn't ease your pain any; that doesn't take away from the fact that you are still suffering. So there is the temptation just to give in. To hide your faith, to keep your mouth shut, to push that teaching to the side so you don't have any problems with anyone.

That's what Luther was tempted to do at the Diet of Worms. It had been about four years since he nailed the 95 thesis on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, challenging the sale of indulgences. In the years that followed Luther wrote against the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church that were contrary to God's Word. He also engaged in a few debates with his Roman Catholic counterparts. About a year after Luther posted the 95 thesis, Leo X, the pope issued a Papal bull that ordered Luther to say that in 41 of the thesis he had taught false doctrine. Luther responded by burning Papal bull in public. As a result Luther was excommunicated in January of 1521. This made Luther an outlaw—anyone could kill Luther without fear of consequence—no law could protect him.

In April of 1521 there was a meeting of government officials held in the city of Worms. They had numerous topics to talk about, but they decided to add the issue of Martin Luther to the agenda. So they summoned Luther to what is now known as the Diet of Worms. There Luther stood in front of Charles V who was the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; kings, nobles, other secular rulers, numerous Roman Catholic officials, and many bystanders. Luther was hoping to debate his teachings; instead he was asked two simple questions: are these your books? Do you wish to recant (that is, to take back) your teachings? Luther answered the first question "The books are all mine, but I have written more." But as for the second question, he asked to have a day to think about his answer, and his request was given to him. The next day, on April 18, 1521, Luther again stood before the leaders of both the secular and religious world. It was 6 p.m. darkness was beginning to settle in and candles had to be lit so the two sides could see each other. Luther had a few companions with him including a lawyer. But he was on his own. He was ordered earlier to speak himself—and not from a prepared statement. Luther, the outlaw, was all alone in front of the most powerful people in the world. Again he was asked two questions: Are these your books? Do you wish to recant

your teachings? Luther replied: these are my books. Some of them all Christians agree with, so it would be foolish for me to recant them. Others I cannot recant because they agree with Scripture. A few others I am only sorry that I have spoken too harshly. Then he was asked to give a clear direct answer to the second question: do you wish to recant your teachings? Luther replied: “Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning—and my conscience is captive to the Word of God—then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”

About 1500 years before the Apostle Paul faced a similar situation. He was arrested in Jerusalem for preaching the gospel. After facing trial on a few separate occasions he appealed his case to Caesar. After several years Paul finally made it to Rome. There he was put under house arrest—but was allowed visitors. We are never explicitly told exactly what happened. But Paul alludes to it in our text for today. Paul stood trial—perhaps before Nero, the emperor at the time and other Roman officials. And Paul was all alone. For whatever reason his companions and colleagues all left him. He could have had some character witnesses to help him out; but no one came to his defense. He wrote to Timothy, **At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.**

And yet Paul didn’t back down. He didn’t cower, he didn’t run away. He stood in front of the court—possibly in front of the most powerful person in the world. He was all alone, yet he wasn’t afraid or scared.

Why? Because God was with him. As Paul wrote to Timothy, **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.** His friends deserted him; his companions had left him. No one showed up at his trial to defend him. But he wasn’t alone. God was with him. God stood by him. The Lord gave him strength to face his problems alone. Luther could say the same thing. He may have stood before the court and he may have had to speak for himself—without notes. But he spent the night in prayer. He studied God’s Word. He knew what God says in his Word. He knew that since he defended the truth, God was at his side. As he stood before the Emperor, defying the most

powerful people in the world, he asked God to help him. And he knew he would.

Both Paul and Luther had nothing to fear. God was on their side. The same God who created the world and takes care of the world, the same God is the king of kings and lord of lords, was watching over them and protecting them. And they knew that the Lord would continue to do so. As Paul told Timothy, **I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack.** Just as God delivered Daniel from the lion’s den he saved Paul and would continue to do so. There is nothing to fear. So they boldly stood before the most powerful people in the world at their time and defended the truth. They stood strong in God’s word in the face of persecution and trouble.

You see, both Paul and Luther knew the truth--something that neither Nero nor Charles V or many others who stood before Paul and Luther: the truth that we are saved by God’s grace which we receive through faith; that we are not saved by anything we have done or can do. It is because of Christ alone that we are saved. As true God and true man he was able to live a perfect life that we could not. But he gave up that perfect life on the cross as he took our sins upon himself and gave us his perfect obedience. Then he rose from the dead and gives us that victory. On account of Christ God declares not guilty.

Because of what Christ as done Paul and Luther both knew where they would end up. As Paul said, **The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.** Their salvation did not depend on them—who they were or what they had done. But it depends solely on Christ. So they knew that no matter what would happen, they would live with Christ in heaven forever. They knew that they were better off even if they were killed for defending the truth. So they had nothing to fear—no worries, no doubts, no second-guessing.

Paul and Luther stood strong before the world’s most powerful people. And they had a truth to share. The truth of the gospel—salvation by grace through faith apart from works. That is the saving message of the gospel. It’s a message that the whole world needs to hear. So Paul and Luther put their lives on the line and stayed strong in God’s Word so they could give a clear confession to the truth before the world’s leaders and so that they could share the pure gospel throughout the rest

of there lives. This is what Paul mentions in verse 17, **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.**

So can you—no matter what the situation may be. No matter what the people of this world try to do to you. It may seem if you are all alone.

It may seem as if you have to face it all by yourself. But God is with you. He watches over you and protects you. As we sang in the 46th

Psalm, **The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our**

Fortress. God is with you throughout your life—no matter what situation you are in. So there is no reason to fear. You can stand strong in the one true faith, knowing that the crown of life awaits.

God is with you throughout your life to watch over you and protect you. But more importantly he is with you when it comes to eternal life. Because you can't win that battle against sin, death, and the devil yourself Christ did it for you. It is through him and him alone that you are saved. So you have nothing to fear; you will live in heaven

forever. Those **who stands firm to the end will be saved.** That is the truth of the gospel that both Paul and Luther risked their lives to spread and defend. And that is truth that gives faith which receives the salvation won for us by Christ—by God's grace alone. Amen.