

*“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

*7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

*8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”*

### **Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

Is fear a good thing or a bad thing? – That all depends on the type of fear it is. There is such a thing as a good, healthy fear. Such a healthy fear keeps us from doing fool hearty things that can endanger our life. When we lived in Marquette, there was a college student who, on a dare, climbed the pole of a high power electrical transmission line. When he got near the top he brushed against one of the lines and was immediately electrocuted and fell to his death. A little fear could have saved his life. Of course the Fear of the Lord is also a very good thing. It is an essential element of true saving faith and can save us from eternal death. As Luther said, ***“Therefore we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to His commandments.”***

There is also a bad type of fear. The fear that keeps us from doing what we should do – what God has called us to do. That is a fear that comes from not trusting God. The Bible is full of reassuring words urging us not to fear. Psalm 46, which was suggested for you to read in preparation for your worship this morning, says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.”** vss. 1-3. Even if the whole world collapses around us or turns against us, we have no reason to be afraid when we have the proper fear of the Lord. For we know God is greater than all and He is our refuge and strength. That is why Paul tells the young pastor, Timothy: **“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”**

Today we are going to look at Martin Luther in the Wartburg once more as an example of how:

### **Faith Drives Out Fear**

By now you all know that 500 years ago today Martin Luther was in the Wartburg because he had been condemned to death. That meant anyone could kill him or bring him in to be executed. And anyone who aided him could be killed. What would you do if you were in that situation? I would guess we would all find some place to hide or get out of the country.

That’s why Luther was in the Wartburg. Only remember, that wasn’t Luther’s idea to hide. Luther was not hiding in the Warburg because he was afraid, but because Elector Frederick feared for his life and wanted to protect Luther. Do you know what Luther was doing when he was captured by Frederick’s men and taken to the Wartburg? I always envisioned him traveling back to his home quietly, trying to stay out of sight as much as possible. But that was not the case at all. As he traveled back to Wittenberg, he stopped at several towns along the way to preach to the people.

Luther went along with Frederick’s plan for a while. And it probably was a good idea to stay off the radar for a while. God kept him safe and used his time in the Wartburg well in writing and translating. But now things were changing and Luther knew he was needed in Wittenberg. The reformation attracted a more radical element that was not as committed to Scripture Alone as Luther was. Luther’s defiant stand against the Emperor emboldened them to begin pushing their more

radical reforms. They wanted more of a revolution than a reformation.

One of them was Luther's colleague at the university, Andreas von Karlstadt. He began the iconoclastic revolt. He thought the images of Jesus and Mary and the artwork depicting Bible accounts was a type of idolatry. So he stirred up the people and started smashing statues and destroying images in the churches. Then there were the Zwickau Prophets who claimed direct revelations from God who spoke to them in their dreams. They didn't need Scripture to teach them God's will and made radical changes in teaching contrary to God's Word. Another supporter of Luther named Thomas Müntzer grew impatient and wanted to see more radical reforms. He wanted to end the feudal system and wanted to use force of arms to accomplish his goals. Thomas Müntzer was driven out of several towns for his radical views, and a few years later in 1525 he led the peasant's revolt in which an estimated 75,000 peasants were killed including Müntzer himself.

These all had a wrong type of boldness. It was not the result of trust in God but trusting in their own power and might. This is the type of boldness the world praises, but it does not produce the works of God or accomplish His will. Remember Paul says that God has given us a spirit "of power and LOVE and of a sound mind." These radical reformers had the spirit of their own power and did not have the spirit of Love or a sound mind. Luther denounced the use of force to accomplish anything, declaring that it was not the job of the Reformation to force any belief or change. He trusted solely in the power of God's Word to work changes in people's hearts.

Because all this fanaticism was threatening to derail the entire reformation, Luther was compelled to leave the safety of the Wartburg and return to Wittenberg. His life was still in great danger, but he trusted God fully to protect him if it was His will. Just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego knew that God could save them from Nebuchadnezzar and the fiery furnace, but they didn't know if He would. But even if He didn't they would not bow down to his statue. In true godly fear, they trusted God and obeyed His command rather than the king. So also Luther returned to Wittenberg to set things right again. He knew this is what God called him to do and was unafraid because God was his refuge and strength.

I would like to read to you a few excerpts from a letter Luther wrote to Duke Frederick. When he heard that Luther was planning to return to Wittenberg, he tried to talk him out of it saying that he wouldn't be able to protect him if he did. Luther responded in a very polite but firm letter.

*"I write all this to let your Grace see that I come to Wittenberg under higher protection than that of the Elector, and I have not the slightest intention of asking your Electoral Highness's help."*

Luther adds: *"The Father has, out of His loving-kindness, made us, through the gospel, joyous lords over all the devils and death itself, and has permitted us to call him beloved Father. Your Grace can see for yourself that it would be the greatest insult one could pay to such a Father not to trust Him entirely."*

Luther wasn't afraid and he told Frederick not to be afraid for him either. Boldly put your trust in God. God gives us the same encouragement in our text. Paul was writing from prison in Rome, knowing he will not come out alive. As he faces his own execution, he writes to his beloved son in the faith not to be afraid of the rising persecution or back down from the rising number of false teachers. He encourages Timothy to boldly preach the gospel without fear. Listen again to what he says, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God." God did not give us a spirit of fear or timidity to cower in some corner and not be a witness for our Savior. The Holy Spirit fills our spirit with power, love and a sound mind. It is interesting how Luther also, in a very clever way, urged Duke Frederick to "share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God."

The Duke was well known for collecting Relics and so Luther said here is a true relic, and you don't even have to pay for it. It is the cross Christ gives you to bear. Then he says:

*“Do not let your Highness fear; but stretch out your arms cheerfully, and let the nails be firmly inserted; nay, give thanks and be joyful, for thus must it be with all who love God's Word – they must put up with the rage of Annas and Caiaphas, and remember that Judas, too, was an apostle, and Satan appeared among the children of God.”*

There are going to be people who hate us and oppose us when we proclaim Christ to the world. But don't be afraid, God is on our side.

What is your Wartburg? Where do you hide when you are afraid to do what you know you should do? Especially when it comes to the “testimony of our Lord.” Do you hide behind your busyness? You have too much to do to witness to others who don't even want to hear. Do you hide behind the walls of silence? If you don't ever talk about anything that may raise the hackles of anyone, then you will be safe. Do you hide behind a fear of not knowing the right thing to say, afraid of saying something that will turn them off? Do you hide behind political correctness? It's not really appropriate these days to talk about such things in public because it might offend someone else's religion. Are there other areas of your life where fear keeps you from doing what God desires? In these days of Covid, there can be fears that keep us from gathering together for worship to encourage one another in the faith as God wants. There are so many fears that hinder us in doing God's will. You know your own fears better than anyone else. Don't try to avoid them or ignore them. Rather, take them to the Lord. Pray for the Spirit of power and love and a sound mind to trust in the Lord. That doesn't mean to be fool hearty and place ourselves in obvious danger, but not to let the world cause us to fear and prevent us from doing what God has called us to do.

Our text goes on to show us why we have no need to fear. Paul says not to be afraid of “the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

What is there to fear knowing that Christ has saved us. He has called us to be His own. He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. Not only is there nothing to fear. That is the most amazing message to proclaim. Christ has given us immortality! Paul rejoiced to be able to bring this salvation to all people, and he was not afraid to suffer for the gospel, because as he said, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” What Powerful assurance. We have believed in the Almighty, Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has shown us all that He has done for us. Certainly He is able to keep us until that Day, the day Christ comes to bring us into paradise with God.

There is one more thing Luther wrote to Duke Frederick that is important for us.

*“If your Electoral Highness believes this, then he will be in security and peace; if not, I do and must allow your Electoral Grace to be tormented by care, which is the portion of all who do not believe.”*

That is so true. If we believe and trust the Lord, we can live in security and peace without fear. If we do not trust God completely our life will be tormented by fear and worry. With that confidence in his heart, Luther did return to Wittenberg in March of 1522. By God's grace he was able to control the radical element and calm the people and restore peace so that they could continue the work of true, God pleasing Reformation. May we always trust the Lord fully to leave our Wartburg and get to work for God. Amen.