

**DEVOTIONAL
THOUGHTS ON
FAVORITE HYMNS**



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Audio tape recordings of all hymns available.

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Preface

The devotions in this book were derived from the rich theological truths expressed in favorite hymns, and from related Bible text. As these devotions are used by individuals, families, church and school groups, may they help to uncover the vital truths, comfort, encouragement and inspiration found in each hymn. The devotions may be used profitably by singing or speaking the hymn, reading the devotion itself, and closing with the prayer. May this work help the reader to grow in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

- 1. A mighty Fortress is our God,
A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The old evil Foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.**
- 2. With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord,
And there's none other God;
He holds the field forever.**
- 3. Tho' devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.**
- 4. The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child and wife,
Let these all be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.**

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REFORMATION

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

One of the great contributions Dr. Martin Luther made during the Reformation was the restoration of congregational singing. He believed that all believers should participate in public worship. Luther loved music and he liked to sing. The people of his parish and of many other churches in Germany shared his love for singing God's praise and glory. Luther said, "If any man despises music, as all fanatics do, for him I have no liking; for music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity and other devices."

Luther wrote many hymns, but his greatest is "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Luther himself loved to sing this hymn. When he faced hours of despair, doubt, or fear, he would say to his friend, Philipp Melanchthon, "Come, Philipp, let us sing the 46th Psalm." The two friends would sing loudly Luther's version, "*Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott*" (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God). Both Luther and Melanchthon were strengthened by the words of this psalm and hymn. So many Christians over the years have also received new strength, power, and courage to work and to remain faithful to their Lord and Savior. As a result this hymn has become the favorite hymn, not only of the Lutheran church, but of Protestantism as well. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a Protestant hymnal that does not include this great hymn.

What is the source of all the comfort, strength and power this hymn provides? As Luther probably would have answered, "It's simple. It's in the Word of God which has the power to change our lives and make us all feel better."

Do you agree? I'm sure you do because you, too, have experienced the joy and comfort of God's Word. The greatest comfort you receive from his Word is the knowledge

that Jesus, the One “whom God himself elected,” died for your sins and guilt and gives you eternal life. All the devils in all of creation can’t take that away from you. God’s Word not only gives salvation; it also has power through Christ to fell the devil. Satan can’t harm you because you are the Lord Jesus’ child.

Are there times in your life when, like Luther, you feel doubt, despair or fear? Once again, God’s Word is there to provide the power and strength to overcome these feelings.

In those times of doubt and frustration, to whom do you turn? You should turn to God, who is your only “refuge and strength, an ever-present help.” The Word of God has the power to replace fear with courage, doubt with confidence, and despair with cheerfulness and hope.

Sing the hymn often, and sing it with confidence, knowing that God is indeed your refuge and fortress.

PRAYER:

Dear God, you are our refuge and strength, our ever-present help in trouble. You are a “Mighty Fortress” in time of need. Thanks for the many times you have been at our side to give us courage, confidence, hope and comfort. Thank you for the great men like Martin Luther whom you used to restore the great truths of your Word. Teach us to use your Word wisely. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

BACKGROUND OF THE HYMN:

The hymn and tune were written in the late 1520’s by Dr. Martin Luther, the great Reformer. Most churches consider it the single most powerful hymn of the Protestant Reformation. There are over 70 translations of “Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott.” The most frequently used are the versions of Thomas Carlyle and F. H. Hedge. The version printed here is a composite and is based on the English translation by Thomas Carlyle.

Frederick the Great called this hymn “God Almighty’s Grenadier March.” Others have called it “the greatest hymn of the greatest man in the greatest period of German history,” the “Battle hymn of the Reformation,” the “national hymn of Germany,” and “the triumphant war-cry of the Reformation.” Dr. John Ker paid it this tribute: “It breathes the force of battles, faces fearlessly the fire and the scaffold, and thrills in every line with unconquerable faith and Christian heroism.”

Luther realized hymns could be enlisted as powerful allies in spreading the biblical doctrines, and hymns played a major role in spreading Luther’s teachings. Luther’s enemies lamented that “the whole people are singing themselves into his doctrines.” Truly Luther’s hymns have resounded and will continue to resound throughout the world.

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