

A Mighty Fortress Martin Luther 1527-1529 translated Frederick H Hedge 1853
United Methodist Hymnal #110

If you'd like to hear the song: <https://youtu.be/FY4DCG-nFBI>

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the Right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same;
and He must win the battle.

And though this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo! His doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill: God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther wrote this song some 490 years ago. What similarities do you see between the picture he paints of the world in his day and the world we live in today? Why do you think the issues remain? How does that make you feel? What do you think God's reaction is to this? Why?

“There's a history of this helping, with centuries of documentation. God isn't a desperately conceived new remedy, but a tried and true help. He knows the kind of world we live in and He knows how vulnerable we are in that world. In a world that is falling apart all around us, it's easy to become frantic and lose touch with God. But... it's essential that we be in touch with Him and responsive to Him. If God has a will for this world and we want to be in on it, we must be still long enough to find out what it is.” Eugene Peterson (*Where Your Treasure Is* pp 71, 74-75, 77, 80)

Do you find it “easy to become frantic and lose touch with God” in the midst of all of today's issues? Why? How does that make you feel? Why do you think Peterson said need to be “responsive” to God? What happens if we are not? Why do we need to “be still long enough to

find out” what God’s plan is? In general, is being still easy for you? How about being still with God and listening? How can you improve your ability to be still with God? Are you willing to commit to being still with God and listening? Start with one minute at a time – you can even set a timer if that feels too long – and gradually increase your time. If you can, write down your feelings and any ideas that come to you during your time of stillness with God.

Martin Luther based this song on Psalm 46. Verses 1-2 say: *“God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when I need Him. We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom, courageous in seastorm and earthquake, before the rush and roar of oceans, the tremors that shift mountains.”* The Message¹

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.”

Do you consider God a “safe place”, a “bulwark never failing”? Why? How does that make you feel? Do you actually turn to God for help in times of trouble? If you do, how did you learn to turn to God? If you don’t, why don’t you? Could you learn to turn to God? How can Wesley help you?

“Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the Right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing.
You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same;
and He must win the battle.”

Do you often rely on your own strength? How does that work for you? Luther says that on our own we’re unsuccessful, but we’re successful with “the Right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing”. Do you agree?

Psalm 46:10a *“Step out of the traffic! Take a long look at Me, your High God, above politics, above everything.”* The Message¹

“That word above all earthly powers no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth.”

Why is it important for God to stay above “all earthly powers”, “above politics”?
What “gifts” have we, as humans, been given to help us deal with the current situation?
Make a list and explain each gift.
Which gifts do you feel you have? How can use these gifts to help others deal with the current situation?

¹ The Message Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson