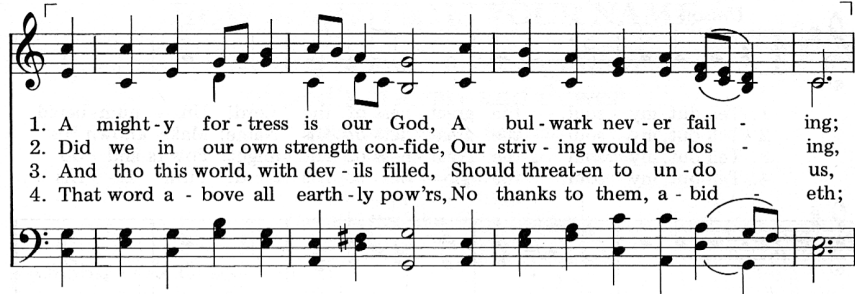
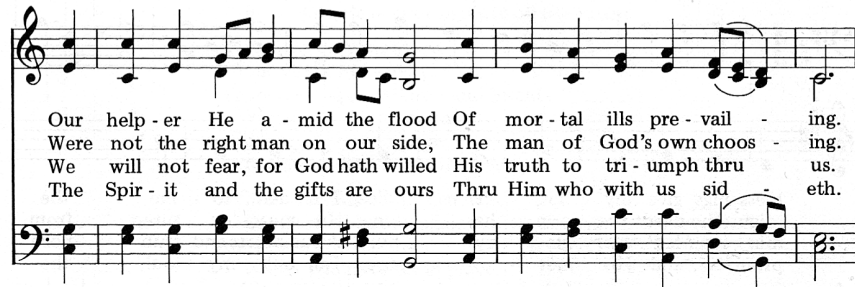


A Mighty Fortress Is Our God 26

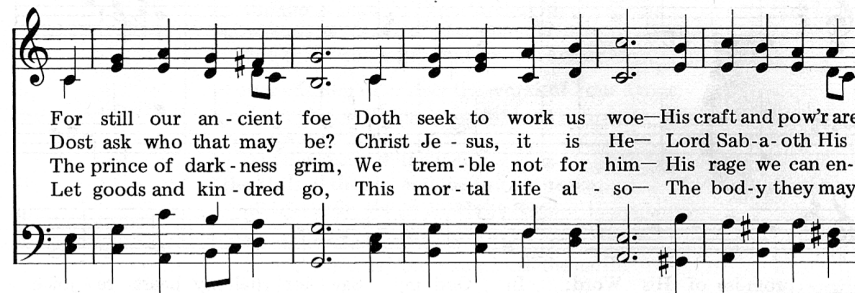
The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Ps. 46:7



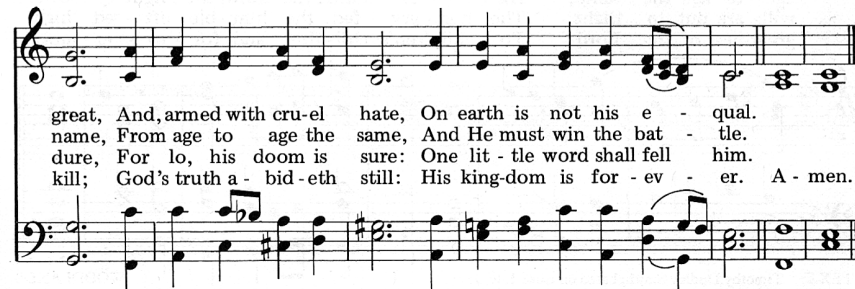
1. A might-y for-tress is our God, A bul-wark nev-er fail-ing;
2. Did we in our own strength con-fide, Our striv-ing would be los-ing,
3. And tho this world, with dev-ils filled, Should threat-en to un-do us,
4. That word a-bove all earth-ly pow'rs, No thanks to them, a-bid-eth;



Our help-er He a-mid the flood Of mor-tal ills pre-vail-ing.
Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choos-ing.
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri-umph thru us.
The Spir-it and the gifts are ours Thru Him who with us sid-eth.



For still our an-cient foe Doth seek to work us woe—His craft and pow'r are
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je-sus, it is He— Lord Sab-a-oth His
The prince of dark-ness grim, We trem-ble not for him— His rage we can-
Let goods and kin-dred go, This mor-tal life al-so— The bod-y they may



great, And, armed with cru-el hate, On earth is not his e-qual.
name, From age to age the same, And He must win the bat-tle.
dure, For lo, his doom is sure: One lit-tle word shall fell him.
kill; God's truth a-bid-eth still: His king-dom is for-ev-er. A-men.

TEXT: Martin Luther; translated by Frederick H. Hedge; based on Psalm 46
MUSIC: Martin Luther

EIN' FESTE BURG
8.7.8.7.6.6.6.7.

CCF Study Notes Tuesday 7 AM Study 23 January 2007 2 Peter 3

Before beginning to read from 2 Peter, let us spend time in prayer, considering Christ's return and its implications for our lives here and now. Let us ask God to help us do the following:

1. **Be mindful** of the words of the prophets and commandments of the apostles,
2. **Give no heed** to scoffers, who disparage belief in Christ's soon return,
3. **Consider** that things have not always been nor will always be as they are now on earth,
4. **Hold fast** to God's promises, never doubting that His timing is perfect,
5. **Walk** always in holy conduct and godliness, knowing Jesus' return is imminent,
6. **Look** at what is taught in scripture concerning the return of Christ, no twisting it in any way,
7. **Remain** steadfast, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter directs our attention to the books of the Old and New testaments as being vital reminders of the essential truths about Jesus Christ and our salvation. Rather than growing reminiscent in his last words, Peter looks and points forward to the return of Christ and the destruction of this world. He glorifies Christ alone, who remains forever though all else be destroyed. Those Christ had not yet returned, Peter had no doubt Christ would return, and stood against those who were questioning whether Christ would return. God's timing is always perfect, though He marks time differently from us. The imminent return of Christ must always shape our behavior here on earth. We are to live as if He could return at any moment.

(3:1-2) Peter wrote this letter as a reminder of certain truths to stir up thinking about important issues of the faith. Since Peter expected to be executed shortly he directs our attention to the words of the prophets, as found in the books of the Old Testament. He calls us to be mindful of their words, since they tell of Jesus Christ and of our salvation. Peter also calls us of the commands of the apostles, referring apparently to those writings which would eventually form the New Testament. It is unusual for New Testament writings to have such a complete and organized view of Biblical literature. The Holy Spirit was careful to lay the groundwork for the difficult task of completing the cannon of scripture through these words in 2 Peter. The work of the later councils finds derives some of its authority from this passage – or at least the motivation.

We need to understand that this is written to us, that we need to be mindful of the words of the Old Testament writers and the commands of the New Testament writers. Just as false teachers were beginning to stand against the apostles in that day, so false teachers often stand against the scriptures today. Whenever any teacher questions the authority of scripture, you know that trouble lies ahead. This is a simple test we can use today.

Peter writes to those who have pure minds – those who are prepared to trust and obey God's words to them because their consciences have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and they are

walking in the Spirit and in newness of life. Those whose minds are corrupted by various lusts will reject God's word for one reason or another. Peter does not write to those who will not hear what the Holy Spirit is saying through scripture. We need to understand that most unbelievers simply cannot accept what the scriptures have to say. Those who are already born again need only a reminder.

(3:3-4) We are in the last days, as identified by Peter. The scoffers have come who question the promise of Jesus' return. The motivation of the scoffers is set out: they are walking according to their own lusts. They don't want to believe Jesus is coming back because if they did, they would have to change the way they live. Now we can understand why people choose to deceive and be deceived in the matter of the imminent return of Christ! We need to reach out to such people and call on them to stop walking according to their lusts and start walking in the Spirit. If there is in our own hearts a tendency to reject the idea that Jesus could come back today, then perhaps it is because some lust has gotten the better of us. If so, then it is time to find a brother or sister who can help identify that lust and hold us accountable. It is better to be open and vulnerable now than to stand naked and ashamed before Jesus at His return.

The tool used to challenge the teaching concerning Jesus' return is the assumption used in many arguments against sound Bible teaching today: that everything has remained pretty much constant throughout history. Because things have remained constant for so long, it is deemed unlikely that they will ever change. Peter will give some detailed arguments that negate this invalid assumption which underlies many scientific theories. God knows better! He was there at the beginning and saw the end from the beginning.

(3:5-7) A reminder was given to believers. Scoffers willfully forget many things. Many people try to rewrite history or change the facts today in hopes of invalidating the lessons of history or the laws of nature. It does not work! We see three arguments against the assumption that the world always has been and always will be pretty much as it is now. 1) The heavens and earth were created at some point by the word of God. Things were not always as they are. 2) God caused a flood to destroy the earth in Noah's day. Things changed drastically and unexpectedly in the past. 3) God has promised in several places that heaven and earth will one day be destroyed by fire. All material things come to an end, being finite and corruptible. Things will not remain forever as they are today. When this argument is demolished the faith many people place in material things is shaken. The things that can be shaken will one day be removed, but the things that cannot be shaken, such as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, these will stand forever. It is better to build your life on the Rock!

(3:8-9) An assurance is given to us, as to those who are beloved of God. God does not mark time as we do. A day is as a thousand years to God and a thousand years is as a day to God. Some have tried to use this principle to set a rough timeline for God's plan. This is an abuse of scripture in my view. The practical application is simple: don't put God on a schedule! God's timing is perfect and His perspective is infinitely better than ours. We need never be impatient with God. Keep on asking, but don't sweat the details.

God keeps His promises and is no slacker! Rather, God is patient and longsuffering, not wanting anybody to perish unnecessarily, but wanting everyone to have the opportunity to come to repentance. The gospel is for everybody! But time is finite, and the window of opportunity will eventually close.

(3:10-13) The day of the Lord is coming in which the heavens will be destroyed in one big bang and all material things will be burned up. The earth and the works in it will be burned. It's all going to burn! Immortality cannot be achieved by leaving your mark on this world – it's going away some day. So we need to be people whose conduct is holy and godly, so that we can look forward to the day when all things will be destroyed. We will not be destroyed with those things. We will be living in a new heavens and new earth – one in which righteousness dwells. It is almost as if the whole universe were to pass through the waters of baptism, so that the old would die and the new be born in the righteousness of Christ. So much rests on that single word, "nevertheless," and on the promise we have in Christ: "I go to prepare you a place."

(3:14-16) Peter wraps up the letter with another call to diligence. We are to be diligent to live in peace with God and man, holy and without spot, and blameless before God. God longsuffering in waiting to destroy the universe was the very thing which allowed us to be saved. God had every right to destroy the entire universe when Adam and Eve sinned.

Peter specifically authorizes and authenticates Paul's epistles as being Scripture – which is wonderful, since they are such an important part of the New Testament. The idea that the scriptures and the canon are just later fabrications is nonsense. Peter was already putting things in place. At the same time, Peter warns of those who twist the scriptures. We are not to throw out scriptures just because some people twist scriptures to their own destruction.

(3:17-18) We the beloved are warned one last time. We know these things in advance! We have no excuse. We need to beware of moving away from the solid foundation we have found in Christ, from our faith that is based firmly on the authority of scripture as God's word. Wicked living leads us into error. So it is ever so important that we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter gives all the glory to Jesus both now and forever – taking none for himself, for he knew that the time had come to fold up his earthly tent and move on to an eternity with his Master.

P.S. Recordings and notes for these studies are available at <http://www.jstoker.name>. A podcast is available at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast>.