

2 Timothy 4:9-18.

⁹Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷But 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. ¹⁸The 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.

You do not stand alone.

- 1. You stand with those who took their stand before you.**
- 2. Jesus stands with you.**

What is Reformation Day all about? Whether you have been a Lutheran all your life or not, this is an important question to ask? What is Reformation Day all about? Why celebrate something that didn't even take place during Bible times? ***Today we celebrate our heritage as Lutherans, we celebrate the pure and simple message of salvation through Christ alone that was restored through a return to the Scriptures and we ask for God's help so that we may continue to stand firmly on his Word of Truth.***

Today we celebrate the blessing of unity in faith and doctrine that we share. This is an aspect of today that we should not overlook. This festival of the Reformation is not just a remembrance of one singular day in which a monk named Martin used a pen and paper, hammer, nail, and church door to spark a Reformation. It's not about one man, or one moment, or even an era in history. Rather, today also includes a celebration of our continuing fellowship that is based on Christ and his Word.

Today we celebrate that we are united not just in a name alone, or a label, or mere denomination, but through time and eternity we are united together in Christ and his teaching. It is a tremendous blessing to be united within a body of believers who stand on God's Word of truth. It is reassuring to know that God has brought his people through the same type of pressures and the same kind of battles that we endure today. Therefore, we are encouraged to see that it is our blessed duty and privilege to be united in belief and teaching in order that we might support one another. Because, let's face it, in a world like ours we need each other.

You do not stand alone, but we stand together on God's Word. It would be

extremely difficult to stand firm on God's Word in this world that we live in if we are all alone, for we are constantly being wooed by the ways of this world. If we are not being lured in and seduced to consider a change in our thinking then we are being pressured and bullied to give up our beliefs. The opinions of this present age harass us on spiritual matters and attack us on social issues. The people of this world hate that we believe that Jesus is *the way*, and *the truth*, and *the life* and so they try all that they can to convince us that there is another way, that there is another truth, there are different paths to life eternal. Those who love the ways of this world want to destroy our trust in God and obedience to God's will; so they tear apart God's Word and if they don't toss it aside completely they piece it together as they see fit. Those who love this present age want us to overlook what God's Word truly says in order to satisfy the latest longing. In these last days Scripture is twisted and contorted in order to persuade you to be more tolerant of alternative lifestyles, bend on life issues, and be more accepting of other religions as a legitimate way to God. But we can't comply on any of these issues because we do not stand on human opinion that can be altered, or changed, or influenced, but we stand on the unyielding and enduring Word of God.

This pressure to conform to the ways of the world comes at us from all angles. It comes through the influence of friends, and neighbors, and family; through social media and the media at large. It's a lonely feeling when it seems the whole world is going in one direction and you are going another. It is a lonely feeling that tears at your heart and your soul when friends and family members abandon the truths that you learned in God's Word together and instead they jump onto the bandwagon of popular opinion. It's difficult when close relationships are severed because of an unwillingness to bend on what God's Word has to say.

Standing on God's Word of truth can be difficult. That cold and lonely feeling can sink in suddenly for even the strongest of believers, and so we need to be reminded that we do not stand alone. Through time and eternity Christians stand together on God's Word. The battles that we fight as a church body and as individuals to stand on God's Word of truth today are very similar to those that we see in the Scriptures.

Even though things seem to be getting worse and worse as we head toward the Last Day there really is nothing new under the sun. In our lesson for today, Paul felt that same kind of cold indifference of the world and the outright hatred of those that opposed the gospel. And therefore he expressed his need for the warm encouragement that comes from the fellowship of believers. Imprisoned for his beliefs, facing death for his devotion to Christ, he longed for support from the body of believers. As he sat in the chilling solitude of a dreary dungeon Paul made a few simple requests as he writes this very personal letter to Timothy. *Come soon, bring a friend, bring my cloak, and bring the Word. Bring the scrolls and especially the parchments.* In this cold and dreary prison cell, in the face of persecution and death, Paul had a desire to see fellow believers and to be encouraged by the Word of God, especially the good news of Jesus.

Paul faithfully proclaimed God's Word and stood firm on the truth of Scriptures and what thanks did he receive? He was arrested multiple times with this last arrest resulting

in prison and eventually death. This difficulty for Paul led more than one of his friends and colleagues in the ministry to desert him. While Paul lists a few friends that left because of fear, or obligation, or missionary work, Demas stands out as a most disconcerting case. He left because he loved the ways of the world. The original language more literally reads that he abandoned Paul because “he loved this present era”. He fell in love with the thinking and the popular philosophies and the ways of the world of his time and he ran off to be with them. When things got tough for Paul and for those that helped him, Demas abandoned the way of the Christ for an easier, more appealing, and more popular way.

There is a part of us that desires to be more Demas-like, we are tempted to think that would just be so much easier, so much more rewarding to just go along with the ways of this world. Why bother with standing up for the truth of God, when it is so difficult? Why bother with the trouble of swimming upstream against this never-ending rush of opinion and change? Why stand on this side of an issue when so many other Christians, even some who are called Lutherans, are saying it is just fine to stand on the other side of this issue or that issue because times have changed? Why not give in? Why not just go with the flow? That seems like the smoother road by far.

After all, why would anyone risk so much for words on a page? Why would anyone risk losing respect, and status, and friends, even their life over an ancient set of beliefs? Who in their right mind would risk so much? Paul did, and he *willingly* did so because he knew that the message that he loved and proclaimed was God’s Word. He knew the message of Christ was the only way to be saved. Sinners are made right with God only through the blood of Jesus. It is through the Scriptures alone that this is revealed, and we are saved only through faith in Jesus Christ alone. This is the message that matters the most. It had to be proclaimed to as many people as possible. The gospel of Jesus had to be shared to the Gentiles, to all the nations, so that they might know the love of God in Christ Jesus. The gospel had to be shared no matter how much personal persecution and trouble this might cause to Paul. Paul made his stand on Scripture alone knowing that all Scripture is God breathed. He made his stand on the Word of God because these are the words of God; this is how we are saved; this is the Almighty and merciful God speaking to us and telling us who he is, what he has done for us, and what he wants us to believe and do.

Trouble and persecution would come, but Paul had to stand on God’s Word of truth. And it was just as Jesus had told his disciples, ***“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”***¹⁷ ***“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.”***¹⁸ ***On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.”***²² ***All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*** Jesus did not tell his disciples this to scare them, but to prepare them. Jesus warns his disciples of every age that there will be persecution, opposition, and trouble so that we might be prepared for such opposition and attack. But Jesus also promises that whoever holds to his teaching, whoever stands

firm on the Word of God, he will bring through this life of trouble and deliver us to the joys of heaven. Disciples living in a cold and vicious world can trust in Jesus our Good Shepherd to be with them, and protect them, and deliver them.

Much like Daniel who risked his life for the sake of his faith, Paul trusted that the Lord would bless his efforts to praise the Lord and proclaim his name. Paul trusted that the Lord would rescue him from the lion's mouth as his Lord had done before. In his time of trouble Paul longed for the fellowship of the church, he looked for comfort and strength in God's Word of truth, and above all he stood firm because he knew the Lord was with him. He trusted that the Lord would guide him through trouble and would ultimately bring him to his heavenly home.

This was very much the case for Martin Luther, as well. Why would anyone put himself through such trouble? Why would he risk his safety, his well being, his life for his beliefs? Why would this man from a little German town dare to take on something as huge as the Catholic Church, and risk his life? He willingly risked it all because he had come to know the good news of Jesus. He willingly risked it all because he had read and searched the Holy Scriptures of God and he wanted more people to know the truth of God's saving Word. He wanted many others to know Jesus as Scripture teaches. He wanted people to hear and handle God's Word for themselves and understand what miraculous love God shows to us through Word and sacraments. No matter the cost he would make his stand on the word of God as he trusted in God, his mighty fortress, his trusty shield and weapon, his great Good Shepherd. And so less than 4 years after nailing the 95 thesis to the Castle Church door in October 31, 1517, in April of 1521 Luther stood before the kings and princes of Europe and gave this faithful witness, *"I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God... I will not recant... Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."*

In this world that is becoming so outspoken in its hatred and intolerance of Biblical beliefs we may feel all alone. When a group of friends team up to belittle your faith, when a co-worker works to find and stack up evidence in order to argue against your beliefs, when a family member corners you and asks you if that is what you really believe on this issue or that, remember that you are not alone. You stand with fellow Christians, and fellow Lutherans, on God's Word of truth. Others have persevered and have endured for the sake of the Gospel. You are united to people like Daniel, and Luther, and Paul, who were given the strength to endure and were delivered through trouble to their heavenly home. You are not alone, you stand with Jesus. Your Savior is with you. Be encouraged that Jesus was not only Martin Luther's refuge and strength, but he is your mighty shield and weapon. Although you may face difficulty and trouble, ridicule and pressure, the Lord will rescue you from every evil attack. He promises to God and keep you and that he will bring you through the trouble of this world to your heavenly home. This is the promise of faithful that was so valuable to Paul in his final days; this is the promise of God that is vital to you and me throughout all our days. ***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.***