

A Mighty Fortress- October's Hymn of the Month 2024

By
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When the end of October rolls around each year, most people in America spend a lot of time thinking about Halloween. That's a scary thought. Not scary in the sense of ghoulish, but scary in that we overlook one of the most important events in Christian history. For on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses (complaints) to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church, in Germany, protesting the teachings and practices of the medieval Roman Church. With this event, the 16th century Protestant Reformation was formally born. Luther built this Reformation on three main tenets: the re-establishment of the scriptures, clarifying the means of salvation and the restoration of congregational singing.

Apparently, Luther had strong convictions not only about God's word, but also about the use and power of sacred music. He 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 man." He went on to add, "I wish to compose sacred hymns so that the Word of God may dwell among the people also by means of songs." One might refer to the Reformation as the *Singing Reformation* as Luther led the cause to put singing back into the voices of the congregations

To help keep the momentum up, Martin Luther started to write hymns. If his lifetime of 66 years, he spent 13 years translating the Bible into his native German language and would also compose 37 hymns. Toward the end of his life, he wrote, "I would allow no man to preach or teach God's people without a proper knowledge of the use and power of sacred song."

Martin Luther's father had wanted his son to be a lawyer, but now it appeared he needed one. Martin was under great attack from the Roman Catholic Church: ex-communication, imprisonment, charges of heresy, and even threats of death. Because of this, Martin Luther and his followers were forever being hauled into court. To give his followers courage, on the eve of a bitter court battle, in 1529, Martin Luther would write a hymn based on Psalm 46. This hymn became the most powerful hymn of the Protestant Reformation movement and still serves today as a reminder to those who trust in Christ that nothing can separate us from God's love. As Luther put it, "Christ Jesus, it is He—Lord Sabaoth His name, From age to age the same—and He must win the Battle."

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