

**Reformation Sunday – Year A – October 30, 2011 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**  
**Based on 2Timothy 4:9-18 - written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Christian, be on your guard!**

- I.       **The enemies are real**
- II.       **But your help is stronger**

This week the National Nuclear Security Administration announced that the last B53 nuclear bomb had been dismantled. The bomb, about the size of a minivan and weighing 10,000 pounds, was one of the highest yield nuclear bombs ever built by the United States. It was originally designed for busting bunkers hidden deep beneath the earth's surface. The B53 bomb was more powerful than the bombs that were dropped on Japan in the 1940s. Not to fear! The United States has a weapons arsenal more sophisticated, more deadly and more precise than the B53. Our military stands guard every waking hour to protect our borders from threats on land, sea and air – because the enemies to the United States are real. They continue to plot attacks against our country. I can only imagine that life as a national security official must not be easy - always vigilant, always waiting, wondering, when and where the next attack will come.

As Christians life is not always peaceful either. For Jesus has sent us into the world to share the good news that salvation is free through faith in Christ Jesus. But Jesus reminded us this morning in Matthew 10 that he sends us out as sheep among wolves. Our enemies are real, and they can be violent. We will learn this morning: the same is true for the Apostle Paul, for Martin Luther, and for us – our enemies are real, but our help is stronger.

**I.       The enemies are real**

Our lesson this morning is from the Apostle Paul's letter to Pastor Timothy. It would be the final letter that Paul would pen. Paul wrote this letter from prison. Unlike his first imprisonment, where he was under house arrest and could move freely about his home, he was now chained like a common criminal, sitting in a damp, dark dungeon somewhere beneath the city of Rome. He wrote to Pastor Timothy requesting that he arrive as quickly as possible. Paul had mentored Timothy in his spiritual journey and was like a father to him. Timothy was very dear to Paul and now Paul needed him.

In vs16 he wrote, **“At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.”** At his first trial, none of his friends came to court to support him, because everyone had left, everyone except Luke, the doctor, who had accompanied Paul on many of his journeys. Some of his travel companions had left for other countries to spread the good news of Jesus. Others had left because, like Jesus' disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, they were afraid. Now Paul's enemy of loneliness stalked him in the shadows of his prison cell.

Others had not only abandoned Paul, but they had abandoned the gospel. In vs10 Paul wrote about a man named Demas, who deserted Paul because he loved this world more than the gospel – like so many today who abandon the precious treasure of God's Word for the fleeting pleasures of this world. Paul also mentioned Alexander who did him great harm. (vs14) When Paul had spent time in the city of Ephesus, Alexander and other metalworkers had Paul arrested and kicked out of the city. Paul's preaching had turned the hearts of many people away from the prevalent false idol worship, which put these artisans out of work. Paul's enemies physically opposed Paul's ministry.

Finally, in this letter to Pastor Timothy Paul indicated that his life was near its end. He knew that he would not leave that prison alive, but would soon enter the executioner's chambers. Death was also lurking in the shadows of Paul's prison cell.

1500 years later, these same enemies stalked a man named Martin Luther. Martin had joined the order of Augustinian monks of the Roman Catholic Church. Although he had dedicated his life to the Word of God, his conscience had been tormented by the “angry God” concept. Martin found that he could not do enough to find

peace with God. He tried so hard to do good and not to sin. But even confession and penance became questionable to him. Would these actions satisfy a God who would punish him for those sins anyway? Not until Martin became a professor and a doctor of theology at a brand new university in Wittenberg, did Martin finally begin to listen to the Scriptures. He discovered that a man is not saved by his works, but in Christ alone. For the first time in his life, Martin felt free of his sins. He was at peace with God.

The enemies came out of the shadows when he tried to tell everyone what he had found. On the eve of All Saint's Day, Halloween, October 31, 1517, he posted 95 theses; statements against the teachings of the Catholic Church. The teaching of salvation through faith in Christ alone was offensive to the officials of the Catholic Church. They maintained that a man is saved by his good works and efforts. Who did this little professor of theology think he was?

Just four years later, in April of 1521, Luther was summoned to the city of Worms, Germany. There he stood before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the royal officials of the Catholic Church and was told, "Recant! Take back what you have written and preached or we will declare you an outlaw!" This meant that Luther would be a wanted man. Anyone who found Luther could kill him without recourse by the authorities. Luther's enemies had drawn their guns, taken aim and were ready to pull the trigger. What would he do?

Today, the president of the United States is not summoning our Lutheran pastors to the White House, threatening them to cease preaching or else. The members of their parish are not being arrested and thrown into prison for believing in Christ alone. But we carry the same message as the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther and so we have enemies.

We may not have our lives on the line, but popularity, a promotion, our reputation, and relationships are at stake. It's not popular to answer the tough questions of doctrine with Scripture alone, when the rest of the world would rather base their beliefs on their feelings or philosophy or elevating tradition above Scripture. It's not popular to stand on the truth that there is only one way to salvation and that through Christ alone. We may refuse a new job or a promotion because doing so would hinder us from worshiping regularly on Sunday mornings. A relationship between a young man and young lady may end when the Christian says, "No, we are not going to sleep together until we are married, because God wants us to reserve the gift of sex for marriage." Family ties may be loosened when unchurched relatives come to visit and on Sunday morning they choose to stay at home, offended, while you come to the house of God to be fed with His Word.

Satan comes with his guns blazing asking us, "Is it really worth it?" He plants the land mines of doubt as we walk our path clinging to Scripture alone. Are we willing to stand up for the truth that salvation is in Christ alone? Are we willing to give up family and relationships and popularity for the sake of the Word of God? What if our life is at stake? Would we willing go to our execution, as Paul did, and as Daniel went to the lions' den? In the weakness of our sinful flesh we ask, "How could I? How could I ever have the faith of Daniel, or Paul or Martin Luther?" Paul answers, "You do, and you will. Your enemies are real, but your help is stronger."

## II. Your help is stronger

Paul was weak. He had been abandoned. Death was imminent. But he wrote, "**The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.**" (vs17) His enemy of loneliness had to flee when the Lord stood next to him, for Jesus had promised, "**Behold! I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28:20) Jesus gave Paul strength when Paul clung to Jesus' promises. Death was creeping in the shadows of his prison cell. The fear of death had to flee when Paul put his trust in Jesus' resurrection. Paul boldly confessed to death, "**The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.**" (vs18) Through faith in Christ alone, Paul had the assurance that even though he would soon be executed, his Savior would send his holy angels and escort him safely to the mansions of heaven.

You would think that a man on death row would just want to get it over with. Jesus had plans for Paul and delayed his execution. **“But 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.”** (vs17) Even in prison, Jesus used Paul to preach to the Soldiers who escorted him to court, to the judges, to princes and kings, to anyone who would listen. From the gospel this morning, Jesus had promised, **“On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them.”** (Matthew 10:18)

These are the opportunities that Jesus provided for Martin Luther. The lowly professor from Wittenberg, stood in a crowded room, in front of Charles V, heir to a 1000-year-old empire, Cardinal Cajetan, archbishops, and other officials from the Catholic Church, princes from Germany, and with his life on the line Luther boldly confessed, “Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear and distinct grounds and reasoning – and my conscience is captive to the Word of God – then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen.”

In our lifetime we may not be summoned to stand before princes and kings, we may not have our life on the line, but our reputations, our jobs, our relationships, our friends and our families are. We are forced to stand before them and make our confession of faith. We are forced to stand before this sinful society and make our confession of faith. And their attacks may feel like 10,000 pound nuclear bombs. And Satan will come with his guns blazing, firing at us with the reminders of all our sins of failing to stand up for the truth, with all of our sins of being afraid in the face of persecution. But Jesus stood in front of us. Instead of deflecting those bullets like Superman, he took those shots, and allowed the destructive force of the bomb of your sins to fall on him. He died and your sins died with him.

Your enemies are real, but your help is stronger. See how he defeated sin and Satan for you! And when death stands face-to-face with you, you will boldly say to death, **“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack, and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.”** Jesus proved that he is your help and that he is stronger. He proved it on Easter Sunday morning. He guarantees that through faith in him alone, he will send his angels to safely escort you into the mansions of heaven.

Your enemies will attack, but Jesus will stand by you. He will give you strength. In thanks to him, we will get busy. We will continue our work. We will be strong. We will boldly confess our faith.

And with the Apostle Paul we will always say, “To him be glory forever and ever! Amen!”