



This powerful hymn may be the greatest of all to come out of the Reformation. Written by the leading Reformer, Martin Luther, in 1529, this hymn became the rallying anthem of the Reformation. Very like the French [La Marseillaise](#) whose rousing strains aided Napoleon to win many victories, or the British Anthem, **God Save the Queen**; this hymn draws upon the deep wells of spiritual thirst for the abundant waters of the Fountain of Life to be rained upon a *“dry and thirsty land where no water is.”* (Psalms 63:1) The hymn is sung to the tune of ‘*Ein feste Burg*’ it was likely written by Luther at Coberg, Germany, at a time when Luther’s very life was in danger. He was preserved and protected by many amazing miracles from the Allies of the Papal See. The hymn is so cherished by lovers of God and His Providence that it is even included in most Roman Catholic hymnals. Luther was an Augustinian monk who was awakened from the spiritual slumber of Rome’s heretical doctrines by a reading of the Book of Romans. An underlying biblical reference may be the words of the Psalmist who was likewise under constant threat of death for a multitude of enemies:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult”* (Psalm 46:1-3)

### **A Mighty Fortress is Our God**

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  
doth 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 strength confide,  
our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,

the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabbaoth, 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 hath 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 good and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
his kingdom is forever.

The hymn reveals many long hidden gems of scriptural truth that had lain smothered in the ashes of Roman superstition for centuries. God truly is a Mighty Fortress to His people. How does a fortress and prison differ? They both are constructed of heavy stone and iron construction. They both have walls that are secure from penetration. They both provide for defenders on high towers that shadow the lower walls. They both require authorization to enter or depart. They are both defended by armed guards. Consider this main difference:

A **PRISON** is designed to deny freedom to its occupants. It is designed to keep the offender **INSIDE** its walls. Its purpose is to defend the people **OUTSIDE** its walls from those malefactors **INSIDE**. A **FORTRESS** offers just the opposite benefit. It is designed to **PROTECT** all **INSIDE** from all **OUTSIDE**. Its bulwarks are ramparts of defense and not offense. It **PROTECTS** the freedom of its occupants rather than suppressing those freedoms. This is precisely what God is to those who fear Him. He is our Ark of Salvation in the same way Noah's Ark offered salvation to its eight human occupants – and pairs of animals.

Be not deceived for we are truly faced with the Ancient Foe of our souls – Satan and his minions. So we need a hiding place, a cleft of the Rock, an Ark of protection and salvation. Where may we find such? We may find salvation only in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Ark. In Him, we rise higher and higher above the destruction below as it gains in terror and devastation to its victims.

Luther points out in stunning meter the complete helplessness of man without God. We are without hope if that hope is not focused on God. We cannot help ourselves. The Foe is great and none can compare to him on earth, but we have the Lord

High King as a Protector and Advocate. He is ALMIGHTY and able to save to the uttermost. Knowing that the Prince of Darkness is nothing to be feared compared to the wrath of God, we shelter under His wings and are consoled until the final victory when the legions and armies of Heaven descend for the final Battle.

*That word above all earthly powers,  
no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
through Him Who with us sideth*

The Word of God is under constant attack by the powers of darkness. They have failed to smother its voice, so they now attempt to amend it through erroneous translations and applications; but the Word stands Immutable and Inviolable as our Ancient Landmark of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

An entire book could easily be written about the truths contained in this great hymn, and this devotion falls woefully short in scope and space to cover them. I hope the Reader will study this hymn in the context of Holy Scripture in order to glean so many more powerful and wonderful truths that it contains. The witness of the great Reformer, Martin Luther, lives on in this wonderful hymn to the glory of our God. *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."* (Rev 14:13)

When I sing this hymn, it used to cause me great encouragement, but today I feel that we have, as a nation, abandoned that Mighty Fortress. In the opening introduction to God Bless America, we sing, *"While the storm clouds gather far across the sea, Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free, Let us all be grateful for a land so fair, As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer."* Those storm clouds are no longer far across the sea, but rather in the homes of America today. We have opened the gates and allowed the enemy of our souls to enter.