



# THE LINK

## Finding Comfort in Our Hymns in Times of Cross-Bearing

Dear fellow redeemed:

Several years ago (1998, to be precise), I was involved in a serious car accident while working as a Field Manager for a Detasseling company in Nebraska. It was July 18. It was hot and I was tired from getting up at 4:00 in the morning. I was supposed to go back to Seward, NE for a choir reunion and to do some laundry.

Around 2:00 in the afternoon I was driving outside Tekamah, NE to send my crews home for the day. There was a lot of loose gravel on the country road, and my best guess is that I fell asleep at the wheel. Rolled the truck. Got ejected from it. Suffered a broken collar bone and scapula and many scrapes and bruises on my face. Should have been much worse. Five days in the hospital and surgery by the best orthopedic surgeon in the Midwest, so I was told.

I spent a month in rehab at my sister's house in Battlecreek, NE. During that time, I spent a lot of time praying, reading, and singing hymns. One of the hymns that I found especially comforting at that time was *Lutheran Worship* 423 (LSB 756): "When I Suffer Pains and Losses." This hymn was written by Paul Gerhardt (1607-76), one of the most influential Lutheran hymn writers since the Reformation.

Gerhardt lived what many today would call a "tragic life." He lost both of his parents before he turned 14. He also lived through the 30 Years War (1618-1648), which devastated most of Europe. Not only did his hometown get ravaged by a Swedish Army, but a plague followed the raid, killing 300 people in the town, including his brother.



In the last seven years of Gerhardt's life, three of his five children died in infancy and His wife Anna Marie not long after. Gerhardt's last words before he died on May 27, 1676 were from one of his 123 hymns, *Warum sollt ich mich den grämen*, which means: "Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?"<sup>1</sup>.

*Why should cross and trial grieve me?  
Christ is near  
With His cheer;  
Never will He leave me.*

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

313 LEE LANE, IOWA FALLS, IOWA 50126

[www.immanuellutheraniowafalls.org](http://www.immanuellutheraniowafalls.org)

*Who can rob me of the heaven  
That God's Son  
For me won  
When His life was given?*

Hymns are "sung confessions of The Faith." This hymn is no exception. It confesses the absolute certainty and confidence that nothing—not trials, crosses, even death—can deprive the Christian of what Christ has won for him. The stanza that brought me—and continues to bring me—great personal comfort is stanza 2:

*When life's troubles rise to meet me,  
Though their weight  
May be great,  
They will not defeat me.  
God, my loving Savior, sends them;  
He who knows  
All my woes  
Knows how best to end them.*

"God...sends them." This was a new concept for me. We are often led to think that God just allows things to happen, that He is not intimately involved, that He just sits back and watches the world go on. There was no comfort for me in that kind of God. But if God, my loving Father and Savior, designed the crosses that are sent to me, then they aren't so scary or insurmountable. The hymn closes with the following words:

*Now in Christ, death cannot slay me,  
Though it might,  
Day and night,  
Trouble and dismay me.  
Christ has made my death a portal  
From the strife  
Of this life  
To His joy immortal!*

Since that time, these words of Gerhardt's hymn have seen me through some pretty dark times. I cannot count how many times I have re-sung those words, used them in prayer, or simply recalled them to myself. There are many other hymns that have served a similar purpose. Gerhardt had every reason to be sorrowful and anxious. He had every reason to weep and to fall into despair of God's grace. But by faith he continued to hope and trust in God, and he learned to see God's hand in both times of gladness and times of sadness, as reflected in stanza 3:

*God gives me my days of gladness,  
And I will  
Trust Him still  
When He sends me sadness.  
God is good; His love attends me  
Day by day,  
Come what may,  
Guides me and defends me.*

Few of us have experienced pain, loss, and sorrow like Gerhardt. But his words which were born out of heavy crosses continue to serve the Church and offer comfort and hope in the midst of tragedy and grief.

Another hymn that has sustained me in difficult times is "In God, My Faithful God" (LSB 745). Like Gerhardt's hymn, this one also points the cross-bearing Christian to the suffering and death of Christ and confesses the faithfulness of God to be our "soul's defender." Note especially the following stanzas 1, 2 and 4:

*In God, my faithful God,  
I trust when dark my road;  
Great woes may overtake me,  
Yet He will not forsake me.  
My troubles He can alter;  
His hand lets nothing falter.*

*My sins fill me with care,  
Yet I will not despair.  
I build on Christ, who loves me;  
From this rock nothing moves me.  
To Him I will surrender,  
To Him, my soul's defender.*

*O Jesus Christ, my Lord,  
So meek in deed and word,  
You suffered death to save us  
Because Your love would have us  
Be heirs of heav'nly gladness  
When ends this life of sadness.*

The temptation is strong in times of sadness and grief to give up on God, to think that He has abandoned us, or to think that He does not desire good things for us. These hymns tell us that God does not forsake us, that He desires our souls' salvation, and that He will finally deliver us. If you are struggling with the pains of cross-bearing, might I suggest that in addition to reading Holy Scripture, you read or sing aloud one of these hymns in your devotions?

When we sing and read aloud such comforting words, the devil cannot long remain. Our troubles may not immediately disappear, but we will be filled with a holy confidence and hope that can drive away sorrow and despair and bring us joy. If you would like other hymn suggestions, please don't hesitate to ask!

Yours in Christ,  
*Pastor Beisel*

1. Source for this information about Gerhardt is <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/paul-gerhardt-and-his-songs-of-confident-hope>.

## RESOURCES FOR HOME USE

*Issuesetc.org*

Todd Wilken interviews those in the know about current events that affect the Church.

*Lutherans Against Critical Theory*  
A Facebook Group

*The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*  
by Voddie Baucham, Jr.

*www.gottesdienst.org*

Podcasts/articles on racism & the church, and other challenges to Christianity and Lutheranism in particular

*When Harry Became Sally:  
Responding to the Transgender Moment*  
Ryan T. Anderson (banned from Amazon, but available from Encounter Books)

*Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze  
Seducing Our Daughters*  
by Abigail Shrier

Association of American  
Physicians & Surgeons (AAPS.org)

LifeNews.com

Agenda Weekly.com (Curtis Bowers)  
Keeping Christians alert.

## PRAY FOR OUR HOMEBOUND & SHUT-IN MEMBERS

### SCENIC MANOR:

Mavis Klein,  
Dorothy Barhite,  
LaVelle Richmann

### HERITAGE:

Muriel Muessigmann,  
Audrey Fleener

### AT HOME IN IOWA FALLS:

Gary & Sharon Groff

### OUT OF TOWN:

Vera Duit, 306 4th St., Williams 50271;  
and Margaret Fuhrman, c/o The Woodmoore,  
1200 W. Russell Ave. Apt 131, Bonham, TX.,  
75418



# Sunday School

There are four more lessons for Summer Sunday School. The lessons we've covered so far include:

- How old is the earth?
- Did God create the earth in six literal days?
- Six reasons that show the Bible can be trusted.
- When were fossils made and can we trust carbon dating?
- Are our relatives the apes?

We will be doing a couple of Sundays on dinosaurs coming up. Our class is preK-8th grade, but any and all are welcome to come join us.

August is the final month for our Sunday school offering collection for Lutheran Bible Translators in Ghana, Africa. Thank you to all of you who have contributed so far!

Margaret Wosepka

## THE FAMILY

The family is the first and most fundamental of all human institutions ordained in Scripture. . . . God uses the family unit to transmit His knowledge from one generation to the next and be "salt" and "light" in the world. If the family can be destroyed, the Christian fabric in society will ultimately unravel.

The family was first ordained when God created a helper suitable for man and instructed them to be "fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Like so many other essential doctrines of the Christian faith, the origin of marriage (and thus the family unit) finds its beginning in the Book of Genesis. Think about it: If the first 11 chapters of Genesis are not literally true, then the teaching on the family has no literal historical basis, and thus a family could be anything you wish to make it, but that is not the case. Evidence shows that the Genesis origin of the family is credible and historical.

Jesus quoted from Genesis 1 and 2 to give the foundation of marriage and thus proclaim the true meaning of marriage. (Matthew 19:4-5; Mark 10). ~ Ken Ham in *Will They Stand: Parenting Kids to Face the GIANTS*, 76-77)

# DISCIPLES FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

*Here is PART FOUR of our look at Jesus' disciples and how they became martyrs for the faith. We may want to equate faithfulness with safety and success, but there is little reason to do so. Some of Christ's most effective and faithful servants have suffered the same fate as their Master, being despised and rejected by the very people whom they approached with good news.*

**LUKE** was the official historian of the early days of the church. His account parallels the other acknowledged biographies of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, and John. We have confirmation in extra-biblical sources such as Josephus. But when it comes to the historical record, the two-volume effort called Luke-Acts gives us a carefully compiled, continuous record of Jesus's life and the immediate results of His ministry on earth.

Although Luke was not a member of the inner apostolic band, he had access to many of those individuals. In the introductory paragraphs for the Gospel of Luke and of Acts of the Apostles, Luke outlines his approach to writing: "[I]t seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3-4). The intimate information that Luke includes about the birth of Jesus in chapters 1 and 2 of his gospel has the tone of an eyewitness account. In this particular case, the obvious eyewitness would have been Mary. All the things she treasured in her heart for a lifetime she recalled and shared with the gentle physician who had so many questions.

One of the characteristics of Acts involves what has come to be known as the "we" sections. When Luke narrates events of Paul's travels, he sometimes uses "we" as a subtle indicator that he was a participant. (If this is correct, then Luke first joined Paul's missionary band in Troas.) Paul calls Luke the

"beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). Having a doctor on the team would have been a real benefit. During their travels, Luke must have served as a medic for the group, not only tending to Paul's longstanding illness but also mending the occasional abrasion and contusion resulting from the beatings, stonings, and other assorted violent treatment received by those who preached the good news. Since

Luke was an assistant and keeper of the record rather than a public speaker, he may have been spared some of the harsher handling his companions suffered.

Luke, however, clearly experienced his own share of suffering for Jesus' sake. He accompanied Paul on the final journey from Caesarea to Rome. The time of the year made a normally perilous trip even more hazardous. Describing the desperate struggle for survival by the crew of their ship as they were driven by hurricane winds (Acts 27), Luke included the details of an eyewitness and the detachment of a survivor. That two-week ordeal tested every participant. After the shipwreck on Malta, with his physician eyes Luke describes two incidents that caught his

attention. Paul was bitten by a venomous serpent and escaped unharmed, creating quite a stir among the islanders. Also, he diagnosed the illness of an important man on the island as "fever and dysentery." But God provided healing through Paul's prayer. Out of that disaster came many opportunities to preach the Gospel to a new audience. The suffering had an immediate purpose.

Tradition disagrees over the manner of Luke's death. By some accounts, Luke was with Paul until the end in Rome and then carried on an extensive ministry of his own. By that account, Luke died as an old man in a place called Boeotia (which may have been a region in ancient Greece). But given the violence of the time in which he lived, the traditional echoes that point to Luke's martyrdom somewhere in

TRULY, I SAY  
TO YOU, THERE IS  
NO ONE WHO HAS  
LEFT HOUSE OR WIFE  
OR BROTHERS  
OR PARENTS OR  
CHILDREN, FOR  
THE SAKE OF THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD,  
WHO WILL NOT  
RECEIVE MANY  
TIMES MORE IN THIS  
TIME, AND IN THE  
AGE TO COME  
ETERNAL LIFE

LUKE 18:29-30



Greece cannot be ignored. The beloved physician certainly brought about by his writing the healing of many more souls than he ever touched in his lifetime.

**JOHN** died quietly in the city of Ephesus, serving the church he loved. But he didn't live a quiet life. By the time he died, John had been part of the twelve disciples of Jesus, participated in the early life of the church in Jerusalem, traveled widely, and had written five New Testament books (the Gospel of John, the letters 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation). The fact that John survived the other apostles points to the kind of unique suffering he endured. All of the other disciples suffered and died; John suffered and lived. Though not technically a martyr, John's life displayed a martyr's qualities. He was a living sacrifice worthy of imitation. And as we shall see, he only escaped actual martyrdom by God's intervention on several occasions.

John and his brother James were two of the more fiery members of Jesus's disciples. Yes, John was the disciple Jesus loved, but that didn't mean that he was particularly lovable. He was more likely a typical fisherman of his time: rough cut, hardworking, brash, and short on social graces. Jesus called John and his brother "Sons of Thunder," which was probably more a term of endearment than a compliment. Mark reports that special name early in his gospel (3:17), indicating that their character traits were obvious from the beginning. They certainly lived up to that nickname. (We can remember their argument: Who was the greatest?) On another occasion, John and James were eager to take action, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). We are simply told that Jesus "turned and rebuked" them, raising the possibility that Jesus said nothing, but turned so they could see his face. The look may have been a more devastating rebuke than words. The process of discipleship Jesus practiced with the first disciples was painstaking and time-consuming. And it continued throughout the apostles' lives.

## CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THE CHOSEN  
STATEMENT  
OF JOHN.

John learned to love the hard way. When he consistently leaves his name out of his gospel but describes himself as the disciple Jesus loved (John 13:23), he's revealing what transformed him from a son of thunder to a son of love. Jesus loved him. John never lost his hunger for truth. Even a casual reading of his gospel and the three letters of John gives the impression that the writer was a champion for truth. But an even greater impression arises in John's writings that he was a man of love. Ancient witnesses like Eusebius record that by the end of his life, John had simplified his message to one gentle command: "Children, love one another."

That simple but profound message still describes the difference between authentic discipleship and inconsistent following of Jesus. Since the beginning, believers haven't been persecuted and killed just because they held a set of beliefs. Their lives have provoked reactions. The darkness has violently resisted and tried to destroy Christ's followers because of the awesome power that love brings into any human situation. The message of the God Who loves and Who changes people into genuine lovers represents everything the darkness abhors.

John lived during a time when those who killed or abused Christians had nothing to fear from the law. In fact, they were sometimes carrying out the law. The painful death of friend after friend must have taken a heavy toll on John. Tradition holds that on one occasion, John was scheduled for boiling in oil. He escaped by divine intervention. His exile on Patmos easily could have been a death sentence but, when Emperor Domitian died, John was brought back to Ephesus where he was confined for two years. It is written that he was compelled to drink poison but was unharmed, and finally died in peace.

---

From *Voices of the Martyrs* by John Foxe;  
first published in 1563. Published in 2007, 2013, and  
2019 by The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM).

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

2 Kurt Zoske  
5 Ella Pieper  
6 Amanda Klein  
Merle Rankin  
7 Scott Neely  
10 Arnela Knipfel  
11 Isaac Doering  
Brad Mumm  
Julie Warschkow  
15 Jeff Schmidt  
17 Dorothy Gehrke  
20 Nate Widmann  
21 Dorothy Fiddelke  
Chris Wieting  
24 Marilyn Kinney  
Jessie Martin  
Jackson Wieting  
25 Nicki Smith  
26 Trisha Macdonald  
27 Floyd Burton  
28 Amy Emerson  
Brandon Pieper  
29 Dave Kloetzer  
Ava Pieper

### VIDEOTAPERS

1 Scott Wosepka  
8 Jon Bartlett  
15 Eugene Ritland  
22 Jaden Bartlett  
29 Chris Wieting

### VIDEO SHOWING

1 Lance Barhite  
8 Gordon Lubbers  
15 Earl Fey  
22 Dennis Neubauer  
29 Dennis Neubauer

### ACOLYTES

1 Theo Beisel  
8 Jackson Wieting  
15 Will Hofmeister  
22 Collin Pieper  
29 Zach Rodamaker

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

3 Merle & Janice Rieks  
4 Bill & Ann Hansen  
Gary & Lori Pommrehn  
8 Greg & Barb Gilbert  
11 Mark & Janet Klein  
Scott & Erin Patton  
12 Carroll & Jan Harless  
18 Marlyn & Linda Balvanz  
21 Lance & Kelsey Barhite  
31 Craig & Sharon Bell

### VIRTUAL ORGAN

Chris Wieting  
Blake Pieper  
Martin Beisel  
Ethan Bartlett

### GREETERS

1 Dennis & Rosie Neubauer  
8 Paul & Linda Bartlett  
Ben Hoekstra  
15 Dennis & Joyce Irwin  
22 Jon & Angie Bartlett family  
29 Levi & Michelle Thomas  
family

### Welcomers

Sharon Henson  
Bruce & Charisse Off

**Elder:** Randy Harding



### LWML

#### Assignments

**Altar:** Donna Aldinger,  
Sandy Lettow

**Flowers:** Christy Brinkley

**Coffee:** Floris Beisel

### Rebekah Circle

**Thursday, August 5, 1:30**

Topic: Linda Balvanz

Hostess: Rosie Neubauer

### Joy Circle

**Thursday, August 5, 7:00**

The home of Arnela Knipfel

Topic: Sharon Henson

Hostess: Shirley Baumann

### Thriftshop

**Friday, August 20, 9:45**

Amy Kloetzer,

Teresa Windelow

1:00

Donna Olsen, Nancy Waggoner

**Saturday, August 21, 9:45**

Jo-Ann Barhite, Sandi Ites,

Kathy Silvest

1:00

Amy Emerson,

Margaret Wosepka



**Therefore, since we are surrounded by  
so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also  
lay aside every weight, and sin which clings  
so closely, and let us run with endurance  
the race that is set before us.**

HEBREWS 12:1