

37. Why Do We Call Ourselves Lutherans?

If this counselor this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. Acts 5, 38. 39.

Why and in what sense do we still to-day call ourselves Lutherans? Perhaps you consider this question unnecessary; you say, "I am born a Lutheran, and I shall ever remain a Lutheran." But no man is born a Lutheran. He is born a sinner, a child of Adam, and he becomes a child of God only by grace, through faith in his Savior. Why am I a Lutheran? The best reply is the one which George, Margrave of Brandenburg, gave during the time of the Reformation, namely: "I am not baptized in the name of Luther; he is not my God and Savior; I do not believe in him and am not saved by him. And therefore in such a sense I am not a Lutheran. But when I am asked if with heart and mouth I profess the doctrine which God has restored to me through His blessed instrument Dr. Luther, then I entertain no scruples about calling myself a Lutheran, nor do I fear to do so; and in that sense, I am, and will remain, a Lutheran all my life."

The Lutheran faith is none other than the faith which filled the hearts of all believers of the Old Testament. It is the faith that filled Peter and John when they stood before the high priest at Jerusalem and courageously declared, "We must obey God rather than men." It is the faith that filled the apostles when they went out into all lands, and the faith that cheered all the holy martyrs to confess Christ in the face of a painful death. In short, it is the faith taught by the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the Corner-stone.

I am a Lutheran because the Lutheran Church expresses in its outward organization the character of the invisible Church; it teaches me to submit to the authority of Christ, and to that alone; it holds before my eyes Christ, and Him crucified, as my only Savior; it brings to me the Sacraments as Christ instituted them; it introduces me into a spiritual democracy such as the ungodly cannot possess. Indeed, the glory of the Lutheran Church is second to none, the glory which God has graciously bestowed upon her. Lutherans would be ungrateful if they did not appreciate this gift. Truly, we need not be ashamed of the history of our Church. Let us believe and live so that our dear old Lutheran Church need not be ashamed of us.

Prayer.

O Lord, grant us grace to work hand in hand for the purpose of carrying on the glorious work of our dear Lutheran Church. Grant unto Thy Word all speed and let it be readily accepted by those who hear it, that Thy house may be filled. Render us willing to entreat others to come to Thee, to carry on the blessed mission work with zeal and fervor; and on the Last Day let us see that our work has not been in vain. O Lord, we are living at a time of much counterfeit religion, shams, and semblances. Let us, therefore, all the more carefully guard the precious heirloom of our, the Lutheran, faith. And make us willing to help others as we have been helped. Amen.

We believe the chosen angel
Sent to do the work
Was the man who preached th' evangel
Pure at Wittenberg –
Doctor Martin Luther, whom God gave the light
Of the Gospel faith to banish error's night.

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