Martin Lutheran Old Testament Favorites

**Isaiah Chapter 53** – Luther says, “It the foremost passage on the suffering and resurrection of Christ…” and “It ought to be written on a parchment of gold and lettered in diamonds”

1 Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him like a young plant,

and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,

and no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men,

a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

and as one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he has borne our griefs

and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he opened not his mouth;

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,

and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,

so he opened not his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;

and as for his generation, who considered

that he was cut off out of the land of the living,

stricken for the transgression of my people?

9 And they made his grave with the wicked

and with a rich man in his death,

although he had done no violence,

and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;

he has put him to grief;

when his soul makes an offering for guilt,

he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;

the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;

by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,

make many to be accounted righteous,

and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,

and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,

because he poured out his soul to death

and was numbered with the transgressors;

yet he bore the sin of many,

and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**Psalm 130** – Luther used the text of this psalm in one of his early hymns, “Out of deep distress I cry to You,” which inspired Bach and Mendelssohn to create more elaborate works on the theme.

From the depths, I have cried out to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplication.  
If you, Lord, were to mark iniquities, who, O Lord, shall stand?  
For with you is forgiveness; and because of your law, I stood by you, Lord.  
My soul has stood by his word.  
My soul has hoped in the Lord.  
From the morning watch, even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord.  
For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.  
And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

**Psalm 46** – Luther’s inspiration for “ A Mighty Fortress is our God.”

1God is our refuge and strength,

an ever-present help in trouble.

2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way

and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

3though its waters roar and foam

and the mountains quake with their surging.

4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,

the holy place where the Most High dwells.

5God is within her, she will not fall;

God will help her at break of day.

6Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;

he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

7The Lord Almighty is with us;

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8Come and see what the Lord has done,

the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9He makes wars cease

to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;

he burns the shields with fire.

10He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth.”

11The Lord Almighty is with us;

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

**Genesis 22:** Abraham Tested – For family devotions, Martin Luther once read this account and his wife, Katie, said, “I do not believe it. God would not have treated his son like that!” “But, Katie,” Luther replied, “He did” Thus, we are forced to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Isaac could not have been wrong, whether only attempted or accomplished, because God is incapable of evil. Much more than this, as Luther recognized, it could not be wrong to sacrifice an only son because God actually did sacrifice His only begotten Son.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

2Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

3Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

6Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

9When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

12“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

13Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-561a)] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

15The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16and said, “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18and through your offspring[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-566b)] all nations on earth will be blessed,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-566c)] because you have obeyed me.”

**Habakkuk 2:1-4** - The Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther was influenced tremendously by the Book of Habakkuk. Luther's discovery of the biblical doctrine that the just shall live by faith came from his study of the Apostle Paul's beliefs in the Books of Romans and Galatians. But Paul's famous declaration, "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17), is a direct quotation from verse 4.

2:1 I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. 2 Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. 3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. 4 Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

Luther himself said of this text, ‘Before those words broke upon my mind I hated God and was angry with him because not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood those words – “The just shall live by faith!” “The just shall live by faith!” – then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God.”