

After the Storm, it is time to sort out the wreckage

The Diet of Worms took place just a few more months than 500 years ago. Martin Luther had been summoned to recant what he had written about what God had made him to see in Holy Scripture: that sinners are saved only by the grace of God, through faith alone; or as the holy Apostle Paul writes it, that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forward as an atoning sacrifice by His blood, to be received by faith."

After he had presented his response, while the Emperor and his advisors were withdrawing to deliberate, Luther joyfully cried out: "I made it through! I made it through!" Not because he expected the outcome to be a positive one; it was almost certain that it would not be, and, indeed, it was not. Rather, he was elated because he had won an even greater victory: he had not denounced the faith!

Now, as the threat of the pandemic seems to be petering out, and life in our churches has been delivered from government restrictions, we might want to consider whether we made it through; whether our faith failed, or we ourselves failed the faith. Did it turn out that we actually do trust in God to take care of us and make all things well, even without us setting His Word and will aside, and disregarding His commandment and His promises pertaining to worship? Or did we make it our testimony that when the chips are down, the things of God must yield to those of the world, and our life in it; that the Word and will of God have no bearing on real life, that God and the faith really are not real?

Certainly, none of us have made it through without sin; as we sinners rarely - if ever - do anything without sin. Those of us who did not not allow our cowardice to control us completely, must we not repent of our cowardice nonetheless, our fear and lack of faith? Should some of us repent for a loveless lack of care and concern for the fears and frailties of others?

The precious truth of which we must not lose sight as we move on, is this: that we can repent without despair; and this for this very reason: that although all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, we are all justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. And so we need not excuse or explain away our faults and failure, nor should we; rather, looking to God and His mercy we should see ourselves free to move on and seek to serve Him faithfully in the future.