

Make Me More Like You

✠ Fearless (vv.24-26)

✠ Confident (vv.27-31)

Thanks to the Father¹ who gave us His Son and sends us His Spirit, 'til our work on earth is done:

Amazing, our Christian faith! God tells us how everything began and how it all ends. You trust the only eyewitness account because it comes from our all-powerful, loving Creator so you don't fall for man's "Big Bang" myth of evolving slime. Love the ultimate love-story of our dear Redeemer willingly giving His life for you. Pursue the sacred, settled peace our Sanctifier pours in by Word and sacrament.

You don't need to be surprised in the end as God says stubborn human pride seems to be winning. As if looking back on time from eternity, John reports in Revelation, God's enemies "**came up over the broad expanse of the earth... surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.**" But just when it seemed all was lost, "**fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.**" (20:9 EHV²) Satan, that ancient enemy from hell, "**is full of rage because he knows his time is short.**" (12:12 TPA)

"When the foundations are being torn down, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) Society falling apart, anger growing, ignorance on the rise. But you have God's Word, the only solace for your soul, God's power source for new life in Christ stretching to eternity. You and I just need a new heart with fearless confidence keeping everything settled inside. Dear Jesus, **Make Me More Like You.**

✠ Fearless (vv.24-26)

Have you noticed how Hollywood celebrities heap shame on everyone else, but no shame on them? They demand you love your neighbor their way, but ignore God's first command: "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind.**" (Matthew 22:37,39) God's Law mirrors our failures first. Then Jesus' Gospel creates new hearts, making the bad tree good to bear good fruit.

God's response to human selfishness is totally unexpected. He deals with the real sickness, the deadly virus in our hearts. Sin has a 100% death rate. So God sent His Son with **Fearless** fortitude to pass on to His disciples: "**Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on guard against people. They will hand you over to councils, and...whip you in their synagogues. You will be brought into the presence of governors and kings for my sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.**" (Matthew 10:16-18) He told them not to worry what to say because the Holy Spirit would speak through them. Isn't that remarkable all by itself? Jesus never sugarcoats anything. Like a championship coach, Jesus warns us honestly about what we face: "**A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master. If the master of the house was called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!**" To be like Jesus is to carry His cross.

My real reason for fear is not Hollywood stars or government tyrants. It's sin that God reveals in my heart lacking love for God and my neighbor. How can God make me **Fearless** when I want to run and hide like Adam and Eve in the Garden? Thank God His own Son washed all our sins away. Jesus gives a true change of heart in repentance, plus God's gift of faith to receive His full and free forgiveness.

But now I'm a target too. Jesus' fellow Jews said He did miracles by **Beelzebul**, i.e., with the devil's help. Jesus warns of the same for us and then assures us all will come clear in the end. "**So do not**

¹ *Christian Worship Supplement 747* – "There Is a Redeemer," Melody Green, 1982, Birdwing Music.

² Unless noted otherwise: *EHV - Evangelical Heritage Version*. (2019). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publ. House.

be afraid of them, because there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known.” Bad movies ask, “What’s the worst that could happen?” God shows us worst case scenario, then makes us **Fearless** with the Good News of His grace. For example, if you’re sick, and the doctor gives you medicine with a 100% cure, you’re healed! Cured by God, your final end is your beginning in paradise with God. Hope in God is working to make you **Fearless**. But God’s not done yet. He also wants you proclaiming, trusting your true worth in God’s sight, confessing your faith freely...

† **Confident** (vv.27-31)

During the Cultural Revolution of Mao Zedong, 1960’s China, educated citizens and peasant landlords were publicly shamed for not saying what the Communist party demanded exactly as they required. Historians estimate 20 million Chinese died as “enemies of the state.” Mao simplified Chinese and mandated everyone read his little *Red Book* of propaganda. Today few read Mao, but millions read the Bible. History can only repeat itself as enemies of God persecute His Son and harm God’s people.

Our dear Lord Jesus makes us **Confident** with His command and worst case scenario: *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* True *fear* of God honestly admits we all deserve eternal damnation for our sins, but we respect God for saving us and proclaim Christ-crucified-risen-ascended.

Be **Confident** of your worth in God’s sight despite world hatred. *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first....I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (John 15:18; 16:33 NIV84) It’s as if Jesus kindly puts a hand on your head and points to the sky: *“Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.”* People think God too busy to care, powerless to help. But not one sparrow falls without our heavenly Father. He cares about you to the tiniest detail. He gave His Son for you! (Romans 8:32)

It’s embarrassing to admit, but even paid professional speakers think of these last two verses when your knees are shaking and you’re short of breath. Someone in public makes fun of your Savior Jesus, and what do you do? Silence is so natural and so wrong! Our dear Savior wants us **Confident** in our worth, **Confident** confessing His saving Name. He promises and warns, *“Everyone who confesses me before others, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”*

Two forefathers help us here, C.F.W. Walther: *“In God’s accounting [works] are not necessary at all for our salvation. But they are necessary for the sake of people, so that others...see Christians exercising their faith by works...praise the Father in heaven and accept Him as their God. Luther writes: ‘Indeed, when there is faith, believers cannot help but do good works. Christians prove themselves...break forth in their good works. They confess their faith, teach people the Gospel, and risk their lives in the process.’...[To] refuse to do these things [is] to forsake Christ [with] the light of faith...snuffed out.... They confess Christ not merely because..., “Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven,” but because they cannot help...it.”*³

“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18f NIV84) *Tender, loving, kind and true – Make me more like you! Amen.*

³ Walther, Carl Ferdinand. *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.