

Take Thou My Hand And Lead Me.

Text: Psa 31:3

Suggested Hymns:

341, 299, 296, 301, 371, 282, 352

- 1) Make This Prayer A Confession
Of Your Own Weakness And Helplessness.
- 2) Make This Prayer A Declaration Of Confidence
And Trust In Your God And Saviour.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 31:3, *³ For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This is a day of sacred joy.

Dear Amalie, it is a day of joy for your God and Saviour, who has redeemed you with His blood, when you renew your baptismal covenant with Him today!

It is also a joy for the congregation to hear you publicly join in the confession so sacred to them and to invite you to partake of the Sacrament.

It is a day of gladness for your pastor when he is able, after months of prayerful instruction in the ways of God, to impart to you the blessing of the Lord.

It is a day of rejoicing for your parents when they see in your confirmation the answer to their prayers, the fruits of loving care and training.

And it is a day of sacred joy particularly for you, Amalie. The bonds are strengthened which hold you united with your Saviour. You, having demonstrated your ability to examine yourself, are given the privilege of partaking of the Sacrament.

But it is not a day of joy for all. The devil is not delighted when you renounce him and all his ways. Neither the world of unbelievers when you renounce their sinful ways, and vow allegiance to the God, whom they hate.

All who have your true welfare at heart wish that this day may be of a great and enduring blessing to you; but the enemies of your soul will do all in their power to rob you of your faith and deprive you of your soul's salvation.

Confirmation in itself does not save. It is not a Sacrament. It is not a means of grace. You are, no doubt, sincere in your profession of faith, you are on the way that leads to eternal life; but the goal is not yet reached. An uncertain part of your journey through life still lies ahead of you.

Only the person who endures to the end shall be saved. The way of the Christian is not a sheltered, secure, and pleasant road. It is a narrow, steep path, a way of difficulties and hardships and trials and dangers.

Satan is lying in wait at every turn to murder your soul. The wicked world will dig pitfalls, lay snares, spread nets, to entrap you in sin and unbelief, to ensnare and enmesh you in its toils. And furthermore you have within you an enemy, the Old Adam, only too much inclined to give way to the deceit of Satan and the coaxing of the wicked world.

Confirmation Day is a time when we are reminded of the words of 1 Timothy 6:12, ¹² ***Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.***

Amalie, will you continue on the way to life unto your end, and finally receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul?¹ The prospect is hopeless and the goal unattainable, if you depend on yourself.

The thousands who made confirmation vows only to forget them, and go in the ways of sin and unbelief, is a most compelling testimony to the awful power of Satan, the world, and the flesh.

But there is One who is able to help and save, and to guide you safely through life, and to bring you to your heavenly destination.

It is the Lord to whom the psalmist addresses the prayer of our text. Entrust yourself to His guidance and keeping, and all will be well.

Let your prayer today and every day of your life be *Take Thou My Hand and Lead Me*. May the Lord bless our meditation. Amen.

1. Make This Prayer A Confession Of Your Own Weakness And Helplessness.

Our text says ³ *For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.* These are the words of David, a man of a good family,² well reared, of sound character, of great courage,³ a highly gifted writer of psalms, an astute statesman, a true friend,⁴ a noble adversary,⁵ a mighty warrior, the greatest king of Israel, and an ancestor of the Messiah.⁶

We read in 1 Samuel 13:14 that *The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart.* That man was David.

Here, if ever there was a man, who we think would be able to walk faithfully in the way of life it would be David.

But none knew better than David himself how weak and helpless he was in himself. He knew himself to be a sinful mortal.⁷ He knew he could not walk the way of life alone and unaided.

Therefore he uttered his prayer in our text. ³ *For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.* It is a confession of his own weakness and helplessness.

No matter how well born, how well reared, how good your character, how great your natural gifts, how thorough your education, how complete your knowledge of the Scriptures, how great your determination, you cannot alone and unaided go through life and reach your heavenly goal. The way to life is too difficult for you to go alone.

The way to life is hard to find.⁸ Not that God makes it hard for you to find. It is clearly revealed in the Scriptures.⁹ God wants all people to find that way.¹⁰ But natural man cannot, and does not want to see the true way.¹¹ Human reason and understanding often run contrary to the directions of God's Word.

Amalie, you have been taught the way to life, you know the answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.*"¹²

You learnt that the Law shows us our sin, and that the Gospel shows us our Saviour. We read in John 3:16, ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that He gave His*

only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

You learnt the core teaching of the Bible, justification by faith, *“I am forgiven, justified, and saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, without works, for Christ’s sake.”*

But Satan will try to rob you of that knowledge, to blind you to the true way, to confuse you, and to make you go in the way of unbelief or false belief. His plans are helped by the world, which masks its unbelief as wisdom, and ridicules your faith as superstition, and by false teachers, who ***“use their own words and say, He Says.”***¹³

Your own inclination is to rather seek ways more in conformity to your reason or prejudices than to ***“bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”***¹⁴ The fact that so many people have yielded to the deceit of the devil, the world, and the flesh shows that you cannot go the way of life alone and unaided.

The way to life is hard to walk. Not that God makes it hard for you. His ways are mercy and truth. The only true and lasting happiness is in walking in them.¹⁵ But the way to life is a lonesome road.¹⁶

It is a great trial for the flesh to see the great majority of people go another and seemingly easier way. The way to life is narrow and difficult. Walking in it entails self-denial, and sacrifices.¹⁷ The cross is galling to the flesh.

In the way of life you will meet with affliction, tribulation, and sorrow. Its difficulties will discourage you. The storms of life may beat about your head; the heat of affliction will burn down upon you.¹⁸

Even though God means all these things for your good,¹⁹ yet they are hard for the flesh to bear. You will constantly be confronted with temptations on the part of Satan and the wicked world, who will by mockery or violence or cunning craft seek to move you to forsake the narrow way to life.

Your Old Adam will be only too ready to leave the way of the cross in favour of the ways of the world. Many people who once went the way to life fell back into the primrose path because they did not have the strength and determination to persevere in the way to life.

When you consider what lies before you on your journey through life, you cannot but confess your weakness and helplessness as you pray, ³ ***For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.*** Yes, *“Take Thou my hand and lead me.”*

But the prospect is not hopeless, and the goal not unattainable.

2. Make This Prayer A Declaration Of Confidence And Trust In Your God And Saviour.

Amalie, the text on your confirmation certificate says, ³ ***For Thou are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Thy name's sake, Lead me and guide me.*** David despaired of himself. He trusted in his God and Saviour, the Rock to whom we must cling, One who gives strength us and stability, a Fortress, a Protection against all enemies.

David prays, ***“Lead me and guide me.”*** The first of these verbs means to lead in a certain way,²⁰ while the other implies the thought of a shepherd's tender care.²¹ David's confidence rests not on any merit or worthiness of his own. ***“For Thy name's sake”*** God is as kind and merciful as He is mighty.

“Take Thou my hand and lead me” is a prayer of a trusting child, a prayer of confidence and trust on your part: your God, your Saviour, your Rock, your Fortress. In Him is strength and stability. With Him is safety and protection against all enemies. Pray to Him to lead and guide you, not because of any merit or worthiness on your part, but for His name's sake. Despair of yourself and trust in Him.

“Take Thou my hand and lead me.” God is always ready to show the way you must go through His Word and give you guidance through the Holy Spirit. We read in Psalm 32:8, ⁸ ***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.***

Amalie, the Lord will help you overcome the doubts and objections of reason. He will protect your faith against Satan and his false prophets. He will sustain you in trials. He will strengthen you in faith. He will lead you as a shepherd leads his flock to green pastures and still waters.

“Take Thou my hand and lead me.” So pray when doubt and uncertainty assail, when adversaries attack you, when sorrow and tribulation come, when weariness overcomes you, yes, in the hour of death.

God cannot fail you. He will heed your prayer, He will lead and guide you through all dangers and hardships and sorrows and temptations, giving you rest and relief on the way,²² through the valley of death to the realms of the eternal day, to the joys of eternal life.²³

So Amalie, entrust yourself to the Lord’s care and guidance. Go constantly to the source of help and strength, the Word and Sacrament. You will find that He is your Rock and Fortress, and that He will lead and guide you aright. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Peter 1:9

² 1 Sam. 16:1

³ 1 Sam. 17:33—37

⁴ 1 Sam. 20:42

⁵ 1 Sam. 24:4; 26:11

⁶ 2 Sam. 7:12—16

⁷ Psa. 51:5. Cf. 2 Sam. 11:12-24; 1 Chron. 21

⁸ Matt. 7:14b

⁹ John 14:6; 2 Tim. 3:15

¹⁰ Ezek. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; Isa. 55:3

¹¹ 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:7

¹² Acts 16:31

¹³ Jeremiah 23:31

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:5

¹⁵ Psa. 1, Psa 37:11; Psa 94:19; Psa 119:14

¹⁶ Matt. 7:13-14

¹⁷ Matt. 16:24

¹⁸ Acts 14:22

¹⁹ Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 1 Pet 4:12

²⁰ cf. Psa. 78:72; Deut. 32:12

²¹ Isa. 40:11

²² Matt. 11:28—30

²³ Psa. 17:15