

*You Can Have the Strength of a Warrior*  
*Isaiah 30:15*  
*New Year's Eve – December 31, 2008*

Here are some things we knew for certain at the beginning of this year:

According to Slogans we heard constantly on TV:

Washington Mutual is the better way to bank.

Merrill Lynch is bullish on America.

From Newsweek:

Election results will continue to show that the politicians Americans trust most are their states' governors.

November's election will be complicated by items unrelated to politics, as it seems the nation may have to choose whether it will elect either its first Mormon president or its first woman as president.

From New York Magazine:

Google stock will trade at \$1000 a share by Christmas.

Your best bets in 2008 will continue to be blue chip stocks.

While the cost of oil will never trade as high as \$125 a barrel, we will be paying \$5 a gallon for oil by Labor Day, and once the price goes up, you know it will never go back down.

The problem is that there is just not enough oil to meet demands, and even if there were more oil available, American refineries operating at peak capacity could never keep up with our needs.

From News and Sports anchors across the county:

The future is bright for young superstar Heath Ledger.

Tiger Woods continues to dominate the world of golf.

Even the Detroit Lions are sure to win at least one game this season.

From every standup comedian in America:

It will be just a matter of time before there is a Starbucks on every corner.

That Britney Spears is just crazy. And just how wacky is Tom Cruise?  
There's no way back from this level of goofiness. Face it, kids. Your careers are over. (Who knows, we could still find out they got that one right.)

It's obvious, especially here at the end of 2008, that we are not very good prognosticators. To predict the future is always dangerous, especially in the age of You Tube and internet search engine. And even our wisest could not say with certainty which of the predictions we have already made for 2009 will seem just as foolish a year from now as the ones I mentioned for 2008. Since we cannot know what the future holds, we must trust the One who holds the future. According to our Old Testament reading for this evening, however, God wants His predictions written down, and consulted later, as proof that He knew, foresaw and foretold just what would happen. He wants us to check His reliability, and to trust that He has everything under control. And our part? The Lord God explains it in Isaiah 30:15, "In [repentance] and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."

These are words that the people of Isaiah's time did not want to hear. Israel had entered into a disastrous treaty with Egypt, and the Lord had sent Isaiah and several other prophets to the king to get him to back out while there was still time. But neither the king nor his people were all that interested in what the Lord had to say. They thought they knew better. And that was the real problem.

There is nothing sinful in not being able to see the future; it's just a normal human limitation. The problem was that the people rebelled at the word of God, belittling it, despising it, because they believed they were so strong and wise and sophisticated that they knew better. As one of the best Lutheran commentators puts it, "The basic difficulty is not something external; it lies in their own hearts: they are 'a rebellious people, lying children, children who have been unwilling to hear the instruction (or law) of the Lord.'" ... "the rebelliousness that marked the nation on its march through the wilderness in Mosaic days is still their distinguishing badge." "What they want are words that are smooth, flattering, pleasant to listen to." *Leupold, 472* They much preferred the pleasant lie to the harsh truth, the empty compliment to a cry for repentance. They were concerned not about what was right or wrong, but what was comfortable, beguiling, and affirming. They would much rather go smiling to their destruction than be saved by a sharp cry to turn another way.

When people rebel against God today, their motives are not significantly different from those of ancient Israel. The ultimate example of this tendency is this: Many today are repelled at a call to repentance and utterly reject the idea of trusting the completed work of Christ for their salvation. They either deny that they need saving or have a burning need to be active in saving themselves. Like the ancient Israelites, they want to be dashing into battle,

they want to be the hero. God says, as He said at the Red Sea, the battle is mine. I do the fighting. In quietness and trust will be your strength.” Our strength is in God. And it’s not just any strength. The word God uses in the Hebrew text is *gebura* – the strength of a warrior. Trust in God is our warrior strength. God is our fortress and strength, the psalmist tells us, and He has been our dwelling place from generation to generation. Christ Jesus has defeated sin, death, and the devil, and as St. Paul tells us, we are more than conquerors through Christ. Our trust in Him is our strength.

There are others who know they are saved, and trust in Jesus every day, but don’t want to hear the Word of God unless it lends support to what they already plan to do. Can there be any other reason people get to the point where they think they have had to study the Bible enough, or they have had enough religion classes, that they never have to read the Bible, or attend Bible Class, or go to church again?

As we trust in Him, we must continue to seek His will, His way. I get worried when someone backs up an outlandish scheme with the question, “Where’s your faith? If we step out in faith, no matter what it is, the Lord will bless it.” Maybe. Maybe not. Each day, each of our actions as well as our prayers must say, “Thy will, not my will, be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Remember David and the Temple? Peter drawing his sword in the Garden? Their attempts to build God’s temple or defend Him against bodily attack were well motivated, pious acts that just did not conform to God’s plan. How did David and Peter know God’s will? They listened to His prophet, they heeded His voice. How will we know His will? Perhaps He has already told it to you in His Word.

Read and know and be filled with the Word of God. Trust in Him, for that is trust is the strength of a warrior. In 2009, whatever the future will hold, we will trust the One who holds the future.