



## I Know My Faith is Founded

**Text: Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756)**

**Tune: Unknown, *Concentus Novi*, 1540**

Lutheran hymnody seeks to extol the gifts of God. When we extol these wonderful gifts, we also pray that God would preserve these gifts and continue to give them until we receive the end of faith: eternal life in heaven. Erdmann Neumeister's hymn, "I Know My Faith is Founded" is no exception. This hymn thanks God for the gift of faith, while waiting for that which faith ultimately receives.

Erdmann Neumeister was born May 12, 1671. In 1689 he entered the University of Leipzig, where he received a Masters Degree in 1695, but remained to serve as lecturer at the university. He became Assistant Pastor in Bibra in 1697 and Pastor in 1698. He later became Court Preacher in Weissenfels. From 1715 until his death August 18, 1756, he served as Pastor of St. James in Hamburg.



Although Neumeister was a prolific hymnwriter (writing an estimated 650 Erdmann Neumeister hymns), *The Lutheran Hymnal* contains only two of his hymns, "Jesus Sinners Doth Receive" and "I Know My Faith is Founded." However, Lutherans are beginning to translate more of his hymns, and newer hymnals include more of his hymns, including a terrific Baptism hymn, "God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It." Neumeister was a firmly-founded Lutheran who

wrote and preached extensively against Pietism and other forces seeking to undermine the Gospel in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He also wrote the texts of five Cantatas of J.S. Bach. The first was the text for BWV 5, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, "Savior of the Nations, Come," written for the First Sunday of Advent 1714. The last was *Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende*, "Praise God! The Year Now Draws to a Close," written for the First Sunday after Christmas, December 30, 1725.

Little is known on the tune for this hymn, NUN LOB', MEIN' SEEL. It first appeared in *Concentus Novi*, a hymnal prepared in 1540 by Johann Graman and Johann Kugelmann. It is used three times in *The Lutheran Hymnal*: "My Soul, Now Praise Thy Maker," "O Living Bread from Heaven," and "I Know My Faith is Founded."

This hymn was written by Neumeister in 1718, while serving as Pastor in Hamburg. It was in a hymnal which Neumeister compiled, entitled *Evangelischer Nachklang*, "Lutheran Echo." This hymn squarely refutes Pietism, which was—and is today!—running rampant in the church. Pietism teaches that faith must be strengthened and proven by the works which we do. It teaches that one who suffers hardships is not a "true Christian" and cannot be sure of their salvation. For the Pietist, the only way to be sure of salvation is to feel saved and to prove it by works. Neumeister fights this abuse of reason, teaching that "Man's reason cannot fathom the truth of God profound; who trusts her subtle wisdom relies on shifting ground." Only in God's all-sufficient Word and its wisdom shall faith rest secure. However, Satan seeks to rob us of this gift of God. The only way that this gift can be preserved and strengthened is to be "led by Thy good Spirit" who will "a firmer faith bestow," so we "shall bid defiance to every evil foe." Finally, we pray that God would be preserved in the one true faith even in "persecution, grief, and pain." Finally, all trust is placed in the Triune God who keeps us in life and death until in heaven "I by Thy great mercy the end of faith attain."

