

Gratiam et pacem in Christo, nouissimas tuas accepi literas Consolatorias<sup>1</sup>, mi Gerarde, magno gaud<i>o et gratitudine, Christus reddat tibi inaeternum. Verum est, hanc tentationem esse multo gravissimam et mihi etiam ab adolescentia non incognitam, sed ita nunc ingrauescentem non sperabam, Christus tamen hactenus triumphauit, sed tenuissimo filo pendentem sustentans, Orationibus tuis et fratrum me commendo, Ego alios saluos feci, meipsum non possum saluum facere<sup>2</sup>, Benedictus Christus meus, etiam in media desperatione, morte et blasphemia qui faciat nos, mutuo videre in illo suo regno, Interim tamen certi sumus, quod ei seruimus in verbo et opere suo, sed non in hoc iustificati<sup>3</sup>, imo serui inutiles sumus<sup>4</sup>, nisi quod gloria nostra est tamen, in mundo etiam, vixisse secundum Christum, oblitos prioris vitae pessimae reliquum est, vt Christus sit vita et iustitia nostra (Ah quam ardua et ignota carni.) scilicet in deo abscondita<sup>5</sup>, Gaudeo me petrum<sup>6</sup> nunc (te teste) intelligere, quod eandem passionem implemus, quae fratribus in mundo contingit, sed acerbissimae sunt, sub finem istum mundi |

Saluta Montanum<sup>7</sup> nostrum et omnes fratres Circumcisionis |

1528

T[uus] Martinus Luther

[Address on reverse:]

Suo in Christo fratri |

Charissimo Gerardo |

Vilskamp de Xantis |

Heruordiae Westualiae |

seruo dei fideli |

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<sup>1</sup> The letter from Vilskamp has not survived.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew ch.27, verse 42: Alios salvos fecit: seipsum non potest saluum facere

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Corinthians Ch.4, verse 4.

<sup>4</sup> See Luke Ch.17, verse 10.

<sup>5</sup> See Colossians Ch.3, verse 3: et vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo

<sup>6</sup> See 1 Peter Ch.5, verse 9: cui [scil. diabolo] resistite fortes in fide, scientes eamdem passionem ei, quae in mundo est, vestrae fraternitati fieri.

<sup>7</sup> Jakob Montanus (c1460 – c1533), Brother at Herford. See Walter Troxler: Montanus, Jacobus, in: Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon, hrsg. von Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, fortgeführt von Traugott Bautz, Bd. 16, 1999, 1095 f.

Grace and peace in Christ. I have received your most recent letter of consolation, my Gerard, with much pleasure and gratitude. May Christ reward you in eternity. In truth, this temptation was by far the most severe ever, and although it was not unknown to me from my youth, still so troublesome attack as this I had not expected. Nevertheless Christ triumphed, though my life was hanging by a most slender thread. I commend me to your prayers and [those] of your brothers. I have saved others, but I cannot save myself.<sup>8</sup> My blessed Christ, who passed through the depth of despair, death and blasphemy, will enable us to meet in his kingdom. In the meantime we must make sure that we serve Him in word and deed, but it is not in this that we are justified<sup>9</sup> - we are truly useless as servants<sup>10</sup>, but our glory is to live in the world for Christ, forgetting our former evil life. What remains is that Christ is our life and our justification (ah, how hard and unknown to the flesh!), although hidden in God<sup>11</sup>. Now I rejoice that I understand Peter<sup>12</sup> (with you as witness) that we must fulfil the experience of suffering that strikes our brethren in this world, however severe, until the end of this world.

Greetings to my Montanus and all the brothers. [Day] of the Circumcision,  
1528.

Yours Martin Luther

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<sup>8</sup> See Matthew ch.27, verse 42: "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

<sup>9</sup> See 1 Corinthians Ch.4, verse 4: This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.

<sup>10</sup> See Luke Ch.17, verse 10: So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'

<sup>11</sup> See Colossians Ch.3, verse 3: For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

<sup>12</sup> See 1 Peter Ch.5, verse 9: Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.