



Through Jesus' Blood and Merit

Text: Simon Dach (1605-1659)

Tune: *Musika Teutsch*, Nürnberg, 1532

As we contemplate the grace of God, we find that nothing can separate us from this grace. St. Paul wrote of this comfort in Romans 8:31-39. God gives us what we do not deserve, despite the forces of this world and its prince, the devil. For this, we give God hearty thanks, knowing that His grace goes with us until our dying day.

This hymn was written by Simon Dach, born July 29, 1605. Dach began his education at the Cathedral school in Königsberg, studying theology and philosophy. He set out to continue his studies at Wittenberg because a pestilence broke out in Königsberg.



Simon Dach

Eventually his educational endeavors took him to Magdeburg, where he studied at that town's Gymnasium (honors high school). However, in this time he contracted several illnesses which left him weak and generally unhealthy. After completing Gymnasium, he returned to Königsberg where he became a private tutor. Sadly, the pay was insufficient, and, when combined with his poor health, Dach was often left in difficult circumstances. However, thanks to the financial compassion of Roberthin, whose daughter he tutored, Dach

was able to spend more time studying and writing poetry. Because of this kindness, he was able to advance and in 1633 he was appointed assistant at the Cathedral school in Königsberg and then its Conrector in 1636. In 1639 he was appointed to the University's faculty, teaching poetry. He was later made Dean of the philosophy faculty and eventually Rector of the University. He died at Königsberg while still serving on the University faculty, entering eternal rest April 15, 1659.

Dach was a gifted poet and hymnwriter, writing some 1,360 poems and about 165 hymns, though very few of either are known or remain in popular use today. However, he was one of the best hymnwriters of his time, writing hymns that were personal and contemplative and always pointed the singer to Christ. Almost all of his hymns were written to help the Christian prepare for death.

"Through Jesus' Blood and Merit" is no exception to this rule. However, it is unique in that it was written for a funeral. Dach wrote this hymn upon the death of Count Achatius of Dohna, who died February 16, 1651. He originally wrote six stanzas, but German hymnals typically only printed the first five stanzas. ☒ *e Lutheran Hymnal* has omitted stanza three, leaving us with four of Dach's six stanzas.

Dach wrote this hymn to accompany the tune ICH DANK DIR LIEBER HERE. This tune was originally one of a popular folk song of the fifteenth century. The oldest printed source, however, is Hans Gerle's *Musika Teutsch*, compiled in 1532. Though it was a folk tune, it was taken over by the Church, altered slightly, and has been included in hymnals ever since.

"Through Jesus' Blood and Merit" is an excellent exposition on Romans 8:31-39, specifically verses 38-39, which read: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord." Dach connects this sure confidence to Jesus' Blood and merit. Because these have been made ours by Holy Baptism, we have the confidence and sure knowledge that nothing can separate us from Christ. The world may rage and attempt to snatch us from our Lord and Savior, but it cannot overpower Him. In the fountain of Jesus' Blood is found His love that keeps us through all these things (stanza 4). He hears our voice and is attentive to our supplications (Ps. 130:2), especially our plea for forgiveness. His forgiveness and His adoption are ours because of His saving death on our behalf. He will never forsake His own dear child and heir. Thanks be to God for this inexpressible gift of love!