



Under His Wings



"Under His wings, I am safely abiding,
tho the night deepens and tempests are wild;
still I can trust Him - I know He will keep me;
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.

"Under His wings, what a refuge in sorrow!
How the heart yearningly turns to His rest!
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
there I find comfort and there I am blest.

"Under His wings, O what precious enjoyment!
there will I hide till life's trials are o'er;
sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me,
resting in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

"Under His wings, under His wings,
who from His love can sever?
Under His wings my soul shall abide,
safely abide forever."

"Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings." - Psalm 17:8

"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge." - Psalm 91:4

The author of "Under His Wings" was William O Cushing, who also gave us "When He Cometh," "Hiding in Thee," and "There'll Be No Dark Valley When Jesus Comes." The hymn was first published in 1896 in Ira Sankey's "Sacred Songs" collection.

Rev. Cushing had pastored several large churches in the eastern United States in the late 1800s. He was known for his acts of kindness, such as giving away his life savings to a blind girl so that she could receive an education. At the age of 31, William met and married his sweetheart Hena Proper in 1854. They enjoyed 16 happy years together until Hena passed away from a serious illness in 1870.

William had cared tenderly for his wife during her illness, and soon after her death he learned that he was losing his ability to speak. Some condition described as a "creeping paralysis" came upon him, and he had a choice to make.

Beneath the heavy load of grief brought upon by this double loss, William Cushing chose to praise God and continue to give service in a "musical ministry" capacity. He would go on to compose many beloved Christian hymns. When he died at the age of 79, he left a legacy of over 300 compositions!

One of my favorite sites to read about the background of hymns is on a blog written by a man named Barry Kauffman, from Millersville, Pennsylvania. Like myself, Barry has a large family and has loved the hymns all his life. Perhaps some of you may remember him from his years leading music at Pinebrook Bible Conference. Barry says in his bio that he loves to go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning listening to hymns, as well as some of the more recently written songs of the faith.

Barry tells the story of a fire that swept over the dry fields destroying everything in its path. When the fire was finally extinguished, someone noticed the body of a chicken that was burnt to a crisp. However, when they heard some noise, they pushed aside the body and under its wings found several small chicks alive, protected from the fire by the wings of their mother.

Then he gives some meaningful insights, and an important question for each of us to consider in times of trouble:

"David shared a similar thought in Psalm 91:4. 'He will cover you with his feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.' (NIV). He mentions a similar thought in Psalm 63:7, 'Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.'

"Have you found this to be true in your life? Has He protected you "under His wings" from the storms of life? Has He given you a song in the midst of the strife? How often in my life I have found His protection, when nothing else could help. Safe and secure, sheltered and protected..."

Reread the words of today's tender hymn and ask yourself some of those same questions. Do you feel threatened by the tempests of life and find yourself feeling alone in the deep darkness? If you are His child, you must always remember that He will keep you in the palm of His hand and lead you through to a place of rest near to His heart.

William Cushing suffered much in this life - disappointment, sorrow, illness - but He knew who his God was, and found balm for the healing of his heart in those difficult days. He had the confidence that until the trials of this life were over, he was sheltered and protected, kept from all harm as he rested safely under the wings of his Savior.