



## Be Still, My Soul



"Be still, my soul - the Lord is on thy side!  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
leave to thy God to order and provide -  
In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul - thy best, thy heav'nly Friend  
thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

"Be still, my soul - thy God doth undertake  
to guide the future as He has the past;  
thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake -  
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul - the waves and winds still know  
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

"Be still, my soul - the hour is hastening on  
when we shall be forever with the Lord,  
when disappointment, grief and fear are gone -  
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul - when change and tears are past,  
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last."

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." - Psalm 46:1,10

"They who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31

"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it ... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." - Psalm 37:5,7

"Be Still, My Soul" was written by Katharina von Schlegel, a devout Lutheran woman of the Pietistic Revival in Germany during the 1700s. Little is known of her, but she did write lyrics for a number of spiritual songs published in 1752. And it is evident that Katharina knew her Bible well, as she expresses the many reasons why we can - and should - trust our "heav'nly Friend" to take us through those "thorny ways" to a joyful end.

Approximately 100 years after it was written, this hymn text was translated from German into English by Jane Borthwick from Scotland and set to a tune which comes from one movement of "Finlandia," by Jean Sibelius of Finland. So God used the talents of three people from

different lands and different times to give us this precious hymn, conveying deep truths in simple terms, as each one did their part.

We all need more calmness in our lives, whether we feel the daily stress and strain of a busy schedule, or we are facing an overwhelming challenge or heartache at this season of our lives. We suffer for so many reasons and in so many ways, but we can direct our thoughts in a better direction as we meditate on Scripture and the words of hymns written by those who have learned from the deep valleys of human experience.

The command to "be still and know that I am God" means that we are not to panic in the face of adversity, but to recognize God's sovereignty over His people and the nations of the world. Two times in Psalm 46 we read: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (v.7, 12). Verse 10 assures us that we are safe in God's care, and also serves as a warning to the godless nations who will be judged for their wicked ways.

Verse 1 of today's hymn speaks of grief, pain, thorny ways and change as hardships that God's children are sometimes called to bear. At such times, we are to rest in the comfort of our Father, and rely on Him to bring the answer to our challenges in His time and according to His purposes. We need to get to the point where we are willing to give up independence and control and give it all to God to do what He knows is best for us.

Verse 2 reminds us that God is sovereign, and He will guide our future as He has the past. Our times are in His hand, and our days are numbered. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

That heart of wisdom comes from being immersed in the Word of God, so that we come to learn His ways. Being still before Him allows us to separate ourselves from the noise of the world, or from our own anxious thoughts. That stillness causes us to be quiet enough to listen for the whispers of the Almighty.

Katharina von Schlegel wrote many verses, but Jane Borthwick translated only 5 of them, and most hymnals include only three. I will close with one that is not familiar to us, but one to which we can surely relate:

"Be still, my soul: when dearest friends depart,  
and all is darkened in the vale of tears,  
then shalt thou know His love, His heart,  
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.  
Be still, my soul: thy Jesus can repay  
from His own fullness all He takes away."