



Just a Closer Walk with Thee



"I am weak, but Thou art strong,
Jesus keep me from all wrong.
I'll be satisfied as long
as I walk, let me walk, close to Thee.

"Thro' this world of toil and snares,
if I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.

"When my feeble life is o'er,
time for me will be no more.
Guide me gently, safely o'er
to Thy kingdom shore, to Thy shore.

"Just a closer walk with Thee,
grant it Jesus is my plea.
Daily walking close to Thee,
let it be, dear Lord, let it be."

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." - Psalm 23:4

While the origin of today's hymn is not certain, the lyrics allude to such Bible verses as 2 Corinthians 5:7, which states, "We walk by faith, not by sight," and James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

"Just a Closer Walk With Thee" is one of America's favorite gospel hymns, but it is credited in print to "Anonymous." It is thought to date back to Southern African-American churches in the 19th century, perhaps prior to the Civil War. But it wasn't until 1940 that an arrangement by Kenneth Morris was published, including some additional lyrics. Since then, the song has been known and loved by everyday people, and recorded by such famous singers as Patsy Cline, Elvis Presley, Ella Fitzgerald, Johnny Cash and the Gaithers, to name a few.

We are focusing our attention just now on the truth that God is always near when we call upon Him, and we do well to stay near to Him in the moments of our days. If we start to drift away, we will sense a distance between us and the Savior who invites us back to walk closely with Him.

Notice the contrasts in the lines of the hymn. Truly, we are weak, but He is strong. We are prone to sin, but His Spirit desires to keep us from all wrong. For as Paul wrote in Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." And the Apostle John tells us plainly, "By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

The second stanza reminds us that as we falter under the weight of our troubles and trials, Jesus does care, and He is with us through it all. He understands what we are going through better than anyone else could. In Psalm 37:23-24, David shared what he had learned personally in his walk with God, saying,

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand."

It gives us a great sense of security to know that the Lord not only has a plan for our lives, but He is also near to help us stay on His well-lit path. David does not say, "if" we fall, but "when," and he assures us that at those times God is near enough to hold our hand and keep us safe as we begin to stumble.

Verse 3 points us to our final days on this earth, before the Lord takes His children home to live forever with Him. Our lives are truly feeble, especially as we feel the effects of aging on our bodies. Paul gives us words of encouragement in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 that help us to keep taking each step forward on the path that leads to that heavenly shore:

"Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is perishing, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

It is good to know that our suffering in this life has a purpose, and we can trust the One who is working all things for our good and His glory. For as we read in the last verse of Psalm 23,

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."