



1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. (Psalms 91:1-7)

Many of us pay lip-service to the almighty power of God, but we do so flippantly and without serious thought until that great power is needful to rescue us from our many self-created dangers. We then fall on our knees and plead for mercy when we should have prayed sooner for wisdom.

Today's hymn is truly a classic hymn derived from both classic language and matched with a classical musical score. What makes a work of art of canvas or of music classical? It is the enduring quality of the work that raises the soul of man across all ages of time. Not much is said in our day of the moral qualities of the great composers of the past. Au contraire, much is said to demean their character; but listen to the words that young Beethoven (he was ALWAYS young for he died at a young age) wrote in his dairy as he approached the near banks of Jordan Waters. He had gone deaf – a terrible affliction for a musician – in his last ten years of life and wrote these words: "O God, give me strength to overcome myself; nothing must hold me to this life." In 1821, three years before his death, Beethoven wrote to a friend: "God, who knows my innermost soul, and knows how sacredly I have fulfilled all the duties put upon me as a man by humanity, God, and nature, will surely someday relieve me from these afflictions." I only give Beethoven's remarks as an example of the souls that were behind our classical works of the past. Today's hymn is based on a classic Russian tune (called 'Russia'). The words are an old Russian Hymn, "Help us O God!" It has a meaningful application to the history of Russia at the time of Napoleon's invasion of Russia during the War of 1812.

Russia was a land destitute of the wealth of Western Europe. The peasantry that

inhabited the heartland between Moscow and the western frontier of Russia were extremely poor, uneducated, and defenseless. When the Russian Czar renounced the Continental System (an economic system of Napoleon's own doing), the French Emperor decided to invade Russia. He felt the land would be an easy prey to his army of far superior numbers, resources, and experience. He deployed the largest land army known to that time (more than 450,000) along a north-south axis of 800 miles using the Nieman River of the western Russian frontier to define his point of invasion. Russia lay as an almost defenseless virgin before the giants of Europe allied with France. Their only hope was in God. Advancing against the rag-tag forces of the Czar, Napoleon seemed to be accomplishing his goal. Reaching the outskirts of Moscow in early Fall, he encountered the last major Russian army that stood between him and Moscow at Borodino which he won. Marching into Moscow, Napoleon was dismayed to find the city in ashes and the last remnants burning to the ground. With no provision or shelter for the cold Russian winter, Napoleon retreated on December 8th with a mere 10,000 troops left of the Grande Armee of 450,000. God had saved Russia, and the Russian people KNEW it.

In 1880, Petr Tchaikovsky was requested by the Czar Alexander I to compose a piece suitable for the consecration of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior at St. Petersburg. Tchaikovsky wrote the famous Overture of 1812 to commemorate the occasion. This overture tells the story of Napoleon's invasion and how God miraculously saved a nearly defenseless nation. It begins with very subtle notes of the Russian anthem, builds to a crescendo as Napoleon crosses the Nieman River into Russia. The music is lively and descriptive of the cavalry sorties of Napoleon scouting out the Russian defenses. The overture is interspersed with the French Marseilles and mild notes of the Russian anthem. But when Napoleon is driven from Moscow, the meter picks up with the stirring notes of "God the Omnipotent" intermingled with live cannon fire and the church bells of Moscow ringing in triumphant victory and praise to God.

God the Omnipotent!

*God the Omnipotent! King who ordainest
thunder thy clarion, the lightning thy sword;
show forth thy pity on high where thou reignest:
give to us peace in our time, O Lord.*

*God the All-merciful! Earth hath forsaken
thy ways all holy, and slighted thy word;
bid not thy wrath in its terrors awaken:
give to us peace in our time, O Lord.*

*God, the All-righteous One! Earth hath deified thee;
yet to eternity standeth thy word,
falsehood and wrong shall not tarry beside thee:
give to us peace in our time, O Lord.*

*God the All-provident! earth by thy chastening
yet shall to freedom and truth be restored;
through the thick darkness thy kingdom is hastening:
thou wilt give peace in our time, O Lord.*

There are four main qualities of God proclaimed in the four stanzas of this great hymn whose words were of the composition of Henry Chorley and music by Lvov:

1) **God is Omnipotent!** He is all Powerful and nothing can stand against Him in Battle or in Peace. *"Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me."* (2 Sam 22:13-18) He is the invincible King who ordains the fate of men and armies.

2) **God is All-Merciful:** *"He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed."* (Psalms 37:26) *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."* (Psalms 103:8) Mercy is never deserved by the repentant sinner, and never refused by the All-Merciful Lord. Though the earth has forsaken God, God has not forsaken His Elect. He is patient and long-suffering. He will redeem the righteous of the Lord in due time, but declare a heavy judgment upon those who have rejected His only Begotten son.

3) **God is All-Righteous:** There is not a single sin that can be ascribed to our Maker. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb 4:15) God is Holy and commands us to be of the same nature to Him. And the Word of God, personified by the Lord Jesus Christ, shall stand forever immutable. God will not abide falsehood or lies. The liar and the corrupt politician will, alike, go into the pits of fire at judgment.

4) **God is All-Provident:** Not only Omnipotent, but also Omniscient. He knows all things both hidden and revealed, and all things past, present, and future – even the thoughts of our hearts. Not abiding lies and deceit, the world will be cleansed of these maladies of Adam and be restored to freedom and justice by the Hand of the Almighty! The Kingdom of God is hastening even from the darkness and shadows of our unknowing to its fulfillment in due course. The Invisible Hand of God has purpose and rationale in all that He does though we may not, at present, comprehend.

I will tell you that this is one of the most rousing hymns I have ever heard. It forces me to stand up when it is sung or played. It accelerates the blood flow in my veins and prompts me to draw my saber and confront the enemy of our souls and of our God. God is able to save when the cause seems hopeless to man just as He saved Russia, and Gideon's Army. God not only saves armies, but even more importantly, He is able to save to the uttermost the people who are numbered among His Elect. Do you know this Omnipotent, All-Merciful, All-Righteous, and All-Provident Lord? If you do not meet Him in this life as Savior, you will meet Him in the resurrection of the dead as Judge.