



12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; . . . 14 And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about. (2 Chron 15:12,14-15)

This hymn was not included in the 1940 Hymnal perhaps owing to its appeal to what high churchmen would call the ‘plebian’ class – that means, ‘you and me.’ Philip Doddridge, the author, was a great minister of England and a prolific hymn writer as well. He was a very humble man who took no great pride above that of loving the people of God. He wrote today’s hymn around 1740, but it was not published until after his ‘second’ death in 1755. Why would I say ‘second’ death? It is because Dr. Doddridge had been still-born, but resuscitated shortly afterwards. The music is composed by Edward F. Rimbault in 1854. Prince Albert chose the hymn to be sung at his children’s confirmations.

O Happy Day

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

Refrain

**Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray, and live rejoicing every day
Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away.**

O happy bond, that seals my vows
To Him Who merits all my love!
Let cheerful anthems fill His house,
While to that sacred shrine I move.

Refrain

'Tis done: the great transaction's done!
I am the Lord's and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on;
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Refrain

Now rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.
Here have I found a nobler part;
Here heavenly pleasures fill my breast.

Refrain

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.

Refrain

We have often remarked on the testimonies that lie veiled behind many of our great hymns of faith, and this is no exception. I will limit my comments to brief explanation of the hymn and devote the greater part to a selection about the life of Doddridge from "Popular Hymns and their Writers" by Norman Mable following:

Philip Doddridge was born in 1702, the twentieth child of his parents, and was laid aside at his birth as still-born; but he survived and lived to become a famous Congregational minister. At the age of thirteen, Philip lost his father and the same year entered a private school at St. Albans in which city he became acquainted with Dr. Samuel Clark, the minister of a Nonconformist church there. Dr. Clark was exceedingly kind to the young boy, and indeed acted as a second father to him. A few years later, Doddridge joined the Church of England at St. Albans and on the Sunday of that occasion he made a covenant with God and wrote it out. From year to year he renewed it asking God's pardon for his failure to keep it as faithfully as he desired.

In 1718 he began considering what calling to adopt and felt inclined to enter the Christian ministry, but although he was a churchman, and was even offered by the Duchess of Bedford a living in the Anglican Church, he, like his great friend, Isaac Watts, preferred, as he put it, to "take his place amongst the Dissenters". One morning, feeling perplexed and worried, he took his petition to his Heavenly Father, seeking for direction. While on his knees, a letter was delivered at his house. It was from Dr. Clark, who, having heard of his difficulties, offered to assist him if he chose the ministry on Christian principles. He regarded this as an answer to his prayers, and throughout his life praised God for "so seasonable an intervention of Divine Providence" as he himself expressed it. Happy in his mind, he went through a course of instruction at Kibworth Academy under the Rev. John Jennings.

His studies finished, Philip Doddridge became pastor at Hinckley for a year, and then returned to minister at Kibworth for seven years. In 1729, Dr. Doddridge received a call to Castle Hill Church, Northampton. Feeling he could not take on additional responsibilities he was most reluctant to accept the call; indeed he rebelled against the thought of going. However he agreed to preach at the Church on a Sunday in 1729, and for his sermon took the text, "And when he would not be persuaded we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done". Acts 21:4. Upon his return to the house in which he was staying, while passing through a room, he heard a child

reading to his mother "And as thy days so shall thy strength be". These words fixed themselves in his mind with "great force and sweetness", but he still could not decide to accept the call. Then a sudden death occurred which compelled him to remain in Northampton for the funeral. Seizing the opportunity, a number of the young people from the Church came and begged him to accept the pastorate. This, and the impression the child's text had made on his mind, convinced him that indeed the call was from God, and he finally accepted the invitation.

Greatly blessed was his twenty one years' ministry at that Church in Northampton. During this ministry in Northampton, Doddridge was instrumental in the conversion of a medical doctor who was an avowed atheist. Before Dr. Stonehouse became an energetic Christian, he and Doddridge became firm friends and the strangely assorted pair established a hospital. They began with 40 beds which later was increased to 400. Writing many years later Dr. Stonehouse said "The exact date of my conversion to Christianity is not known, but the blessed instrument employed by God for effecting this great work was Dr. Doddridge". Doddridge himself refers to this as "one of the most signal instances in which God has ever honoured me".

Dr. Stonehouse attended Doddridge in his illness, and bore testimony to his patient's calmness and uncomplaining attitude during his painful and distressing illness. In 1751, at the age of forty nine, Dr. Doddridge became ill with consumption. Upon the advice of his doctor, he went on a sea voyage to Lisbon, but a few days after landing there, he passed peacefully away. Immediately before his death his wife noticed his lips moving. She asked if he required anything.

"No," he whispered, "I am only renewing my covenant engagements with God".

"Doddridge's hymns in 'Spiritual Songs' are:

- 47 Grace taught our wandering feet
- 197 O God, what cords of love are Thine
- 236 O gracious Father, God of love
- 240 May the Saviour's love and merit
- 253 Since Christ and we are one

Doddridge wrote hundreds of hymns of which many are in common use. A well-known hymn of Doddridge's which is not in 'Spiritual Songs' is "O happy day that fixed my choice, On Thee my Saviour and my God". It was written in the middle of the eighteenth century and was entitled by him, "Rejoicing in our Covenant. Engagement with God". It was a fitting choice by Queen Victoria when one of the princesses was being confirmed. When the Princess was about to confess publicly her vows to God, the Queen selected this hymn to be sung." (End quote)

O happy day, that fixed my choice On Thee, my Savior and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice, And tell its raptures all abroad. This is one of those hymns in the Korean Hymnal that called me back to God many, many years ago. Attention to my faith and obedience to God were distracted in my early military career by the attractions of travel, military promotions, and frequent visits to happy hour at the officer's club. One day, by what I mistakenly ascribed to chance, I placed a cassette of Korean hymns into my car player and this was one of those beautifully produced hymns in the Korean language which became a blindingly bright light of God's Love that I simply could not escape. From that moment until today, I have tried to diligently follow God's will for my life. My choice was fixed that day as this stanza beautifully expresses: *3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.* (Isaiah 26:3-4) Though I may drift and wander from time to time, the bond of love with which God has wrapped me causes me never to get beyond the sound of His Voice.

Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away! He taught me how to watch and pray, and live rejoicing every day Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away. How happy and immeasurably satisfied were we when we first came to the stark realization that our sins had been remitted by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that we were now received by Him into His Kingdom! As the Apostle, St. Paul, saith: . . . *but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* (1 Cor 6:11) We watch and pray because we have come into the ownership of so rich and abundant heritage that needs guarding.

O happy bond, that seals my vows To Him Who merits all my love! Let cheerful anthems fill His house, While to that sacred shrine I move. The bond of love of Christ is an unbreakable cable strong and fast. It never lets go of its object - which object we are! Christ indeed merits ALL our love, but He seldom gets it. However, the love of God is neither fungible nor divisible. It is always pure and infinite in its magnitude. As we move nearer and nearer to those Gates of Splendor in waiting, the anthems of joy and peace resound ever more loudly to our aging ears.

Tis done: the great transaction's done! I am the Lord's and He is mine; He drew me, and I followed on; Charmed to confess the voice divine. Your salvation was signed, sealed, and delivered by the TRIUNE term uttered from the Cross by our Lord: ***It is finished!*** (John 19:30) The Great I AM did not speak in tenses other than the Eternal Present tense. He did not say that "*It WAS finished!*" or that "*It WILL be finished!*" The whole labor of love was complete throughout the eons of Eternity at that simple phrase - completed for all past saints, all present, and all future. You did not draw Christ near to you, He drew YOU as the fisherman draws the fish in the net.

Now rest, my long divided heart, Fixed on this blissful center, rest. Here have I found a nobler part; Here heavenly pleasures fill my breast. Our hearts were not very divided before we came to know Christ as Lord and Savior. They were pretty much fixed on the false glitter and glow of the world. Now they are fixed on the magnetic north of God's love. The very center of the Cross joins our hearts in love of God and love of our fellow men. The Christian has a greater Sabbath duty than the Jew for Christ is our Sabbath - and we rest daily in Him as He works through our members. Being sons and daughters of the King of Kings, we have chosen a nobler part than the world can offer.

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear, Till in life's latest hour I bow And bless in death a bond so dear. You did not hear those words of Christ at the moment of His full oblation and sacrifice for you were yet unborn - "***It is finished!***" But God the Father did hear it, and blessed it, and honored his beloved Son with a heritage of souls of which I hope each reader of this devotion is a part. Our first conscious thoughts at the dawn of every day should be to return thanks to the Lord for the gift that it represents. If our first conscious thoughts are centered on God at the morning sunrise, then, rest assured, the last thoughts of our dimming consciousness shall also be centered upon Him at the fading twilight hour of life.