

Hymns of the Church - *Wonderful Words of Life* – 26 January 2016, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



... ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. (Phil 2:15-16)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. (Psalm 119:105-106)

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

Philip Bliss was one of the grandest and most prolific composers of spiritual hymns and songs of any period, and he most often did so with a high degree of alacrity. Among those for which Bliss wrote either the lyrics and musical score, or music only, are: *Almost Persuaded, Hallelujah, What a Savior, Let the Lower Lights be Burning, Wonderful Words of Life* (today's hymn), *I Will Sing of my Redeemer, and It is Well with my Soul.*

Here is a testimony of Philip Bliss concerning this present hymn of which he is both author of lyrics AND music: *I carried that song through two seasons of evangelistic work, never thinking it possessed much merit, or that it had the element of special usefulness, particularly for solo purposes. It occurred to me to try it one day during the campaign in New Haven, [Connecticut, 1878,] and, with the help of Mrs. Stebbins, we sang it as a duet. To our surprise the song was received with the greatest enthusiasm and from that time on to the close of the meetings was the favorite of all the hymns used. As an illustration of the hold it got upon the people all about that section of the country, I received a letter from the Secretary of the Connecticut State Sunday School Association offering me what seemed an absurdly large sum of money, if I would, with Mrs. Stebbins, come to the State Convention and sing that one song.* (quote taken from CyberHymnal)

Wonderful Words of Life

*Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life,
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life;
Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty.*

Refrain

*Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life,
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life.*

*Christ, the blessèd One, gives to all wonderful words of life;
Sinner, list to the loving call, wonderful words of life;
All so freely given, wooing us to heaven.
Refrain*

*Sweetly echo the Gospel call, wonderful words of life;
Offer pardon and peace to all, wonderful words of life;
Jesus, only Savior, sanctify us forever.
Refrain*

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life, Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life; Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty. Those things that God desires to emphasize are reiterated over and over again in Holy Writ in compliance with an old rule of education: *Those things most oft repeated are best remembered.* The Story of Salvation itself is like a budding rose which first appears in the Spring season of Genesis, and blooms to full blossom in the Summer of the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. Words are the medium by which we speak, think, and communicate. If there were no word for the color 'red', how could you describe it to another? But those words of the Holy Bible are life to us. It is our Heavenly Manna by which we are nourished to grow and be strong in God our Savior. And they are pregnant with exquisite beauty! I say pregnant, because they are constantly giving birth to more beauty and meaning as we learn more of how to understand them. Without faith, our works are empty shells; but with faith, we learn to obey and live according to the duty we owe to both God and man.

The **REFRAIN**: *Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life, Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.* Any word spoken by God has great depth of beauty and meaning. Remember when Mary, forlorn and weeping sat without the Garden Tomb in profusion of tears for the missing - and presumed dead - body of her Lord? Do you remember when she mistook Jesus for the Gardener (which He truly was)? She did not recognize Him for her many tears, but when He called her name, **Mary!** no other had ever called her name so beautifully - and immediately she knew it was the Lord. Even our disreputable old names are beautiful when uttered by our Lord!

Christ, the blessèd One, gives to all wonderful words of life; Sinner, list to the loving call, wonderful words of life; All so freely given, wooing us to heaven. (refrain) Every word Jesus spoke were *wonderful words of life.* Even those words He used in castigating the wicked Pharisees were actually intended for their good if they would, or could, have but listened - but they were blind and deaf to truth. Neither were they called nor chosen as the Elect of God. The call of God is used with the force of Love as its currency. When Love calls from deep to deep, it always responds as an iron bolt to a magnet. Love is the title and key to Heaven, but it is issued from the Author of love Himself.

Sweetly echo the Gospel call, wonderful words of life; Offer pardon and peace to all, wonderful words of life; Jesus, only Savior, sanctify us forever. (Refrain) As we have said so many times before, Love must be an ECHO! If the waters of the sea are not lifted up by the Sun of Righteousness, how shall the rains of mercy fall? How can we love God? Could a mortal man or woman ever love God if God did not first cast our His beams of love to them? What a powerful force, this force called love that even survives death! *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment:*

*because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. **We love him, because he first loved us.** If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4:17-21)*

Consider deeply this sentence of power: **We love him, because he first loved us.** There are no qualifiers or extenuators in this statement - it is concise and to the point. Man has never initiated a love for God - it has always been an ECHO! He sheds forth His beams of love upon our cold shoulders, and then, and only then, can we love Him!

How do we echo that love of God? By demonstrating our intense and unqualified love for Him; but also in demonstrating our love for our fellow man, and, in fact, every creature that God has made. Our love for God is demonstrated in our love for others. Remember: the Cross has, not only a vertical beam pointing to God, but a horizontal beam pointing to those around us. Our love for God is demonstrated in how we revere and value His Word. Do we study diligently as a love letter between teens? Do we meditate upon His Word both day and night? (Psalm 1:2) Are our first conscious thoughts each day at the dawning hour of the Lord who gave us this day, and our daily bread? If we take seriously our dominion over the creatures God has made, do we ever waste the lives of those creatures for no purpose? Will our neighbor ever go hungry while we have a pantry full of bread?

Yes, the Words of God are Wonderful Words of Life and DUTY! Duty is active, not passive. We must be about our Father's business if we are the sons and daughters of the Great King.