



M*Y son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: ²For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. ³Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: ⁴So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:1-6)*

The text above may seem an unlikely one to introduce this classic hymn of love, but it is altogether appropriate considering that none can keep the commandments of God without them being written in the heart, and none can remain true to either God or friend without that love that binds. It follows in the Book of Romans that nothing can break that bond of love in Christ Jesus: *38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)*

The charming proof of this hymn's spiritual genesis resides in author John Fawcett's, DD cause in writing it in 1772.

John Fawcett was born into a poor family in Yorkshire, England, and was orphaned at age 12. To survive, he accepted a lengthy apprenticeship to a tailor. Then, while still in his teens, he heard the great George Whitfield preach and became a Christian.

While serving his apprenticeship, Fawcett became active in a Baptist church and was often asked to speak. Then at age 25 and newly married he was invited to serve as pastor of a small church at Wainsgate. The poor people of that little village were able to pay very little, and much of Fawcett's pay came as potatoes and other produce. Once his wife, Mary, began having children, they found it difficult to survive.

Then Fawcett learned the pastor of a large Baptist church in London was retiring, and he let the church know that he would be interested in serving them. They called him to be their pastor at a much larger salary, so John and Mary packed their household and prepared to move. The people wept profusely at John's farewell sermon. But then, as the story is told, Mary told John that she didn't think that she could leave these

people whom they had both learned to love — and John allowed that he shared her sentiment — so the two of them unpacked the wagon and let the London church know that they wouldn't be coming.

Then Fawcett, who wrote a number of hymns during his lifetime, wrote this hymn, *Blest Be the Tie*, to convey his sentiments and those of his wife to the poor people among whom they had chosen to live. Fawcett served that little church for the rest of his life — 54 years in all.

Two separate tunes are provided in the hymnal, both by the same author, Lowell Mason. The first, *Boylston* (1832) and the second – my favorite – *Dennis* (1845). It first entered the Anglican hymnal in 1826 under an unknown tune and has been in every Anglican hymnal since.

The 1940 Hymnal omits the 4th verse of the original which I have included below:

Blest be the tie that binds

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

When we are called to part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives
our courage by the way;
while each in expectation lives
and waits to see the day.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
and sin, we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship reign
through all eternity.

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. There is no love apart from that which emanates from the heart of God – even among the heathen souls. In order to respond to that love in a substantial way, we must be of kindred minds in Christ which means being One with Him as He is One with the Father. Love in Christ is indivisible and unites us to the Father as well since we cannot be One with Christ and NOT One with the Father. Christ is One with the Father above, and we, being One with Christ, have our spirits elevated to that Higher Ground.

Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers; our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares. Unfortunately, our prayers do not always match the sense of this verse in that our hopes, aims, and fears do not meet with the Will of the Father. You can be certain that prayers which express wholly the Will of God will surely be answered for those are the prayers the Father desires. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* (James 4:3)

We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. This is true religion undefiled. If my brother or sister in Christ is hurting, I must – out of compassion – hurt with them. If I am hurting with them, I will definitely seek to find a remedy for their pain (and mine). We are more a blood-related family in Christ than any earthly relations. It is His blood that binds us together in a family that will outshine the sun in eternity future.

When we are called to part, it gives us inward pain; but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again. We are most often called upon at unexpected moments. The Lord has blinded us to the precise moment of our own death to soften the sorrow and depression of departure. Even in parting with friends and family, what a heavy grief we often bear. As the Good Samaritan of Port Hope once wrote in another grand old classic hymn: *Are we weak and heavy-laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge – Take it to the Lord in Prayer.* If we truly cast our sorrows of parting upon the Lord, our sorrows evaporate and we are together again spiritually with our departed friend being One in Him.

This glorious hope revives our courage by the way; while each in expectation lives and waits to see the day. Hope' anchored by faith in Christ, gives birth to hidden strength and courage. Our Godly expectations are realized often in ways of which we could have little imagined, but far greater than even we had hoped. God is full of enhanced expectations His wonders to perform. But we must remember to *Wait upon the Lord.* His time is always the right and perfect time.

From sorrow, toil, and pain, and sin, we shall be free; and perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity. A bishop friend of mine (Oxford educated wouldn't you know) was preparing to give my young people at St. Andrews something to think about in his opening introduction to the sermon. *Young people,* he said confidently, *What one thing can we do on earth that we cannot do in Heaven?* His point was to reveal that we could not evangelize in Heaven since it was already evangelized. One of my eleven year old's raised his hand and answered, *Sin!* my friend cleared his throat and added, *Well, yes, and what else?* It is true, there will be no sin in Heaven and neither will there be even the least temptation to sin. We will be free and clear of that old bondage-maker, SIN. That sinlessness is bound up in the perfect love of our Lord spread abroad in our hearts there. And that bond of LOVE will not cease, but continue in all eternity!