



Anchor of peace

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. 8 Yet the LORD will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. 9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (Psalms 42:7-11)

This beautiful old hymn was selected by our church musician, Hanna Kwon, this past Sunday to my great blessing. It is one that my family used to sing when I was young and impressionable – and it did make a lasting impression on my soul. It is a hymn of deep and arresting spiritual meaning. It possesses an enduring quality for which the old Methodists are well known after the example of John and Charles Wesley. In fact, this hymn was composed – both lyrics and music, at a Methodist camp meeting at West Bend, Wisconsin, in 1889. The lyrics are those of Warren D. Cornell; and the music is the composition of W. George Cooper.

Just as a man does not resemble the house in which he lives, neither is the soul depicted by the outward bodily form of its abode, the body. The true spirit and soul of man lies deep in the hidden chambers of the heart where no man's eye can penetrate; but no secrets therein are hidden from the omniscient eyes of the Lord his God. Just as the early dawn of Creation was cloaked in thick darkness, so is the soul often disposed to consider this worldly creation as a wilderness of woe and darkness. The soul of the Christian eagerly awaits the rising of the Day Star at Resurrection Morning to end all darkness. The sentiments of the spirit are reverently expounded in this hymn.

Far Away in the Depths of my Spirit

Far away in the depths of my spirit tonight
Rolls a melody sweeter than psalm;
In celestial strains it unceasingly falls
O'er my soul like an infinite calm.

Refrain

Peace, peace, wonderful peace,
Coming down from the Father above!
Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray
In fathomless billows of love!

What a treasure I have in this wonderful peace,
Buried deep in the heart of my soul,
So secure that no power can mine it away,
While the years of eternity roll!

Refrain

I am resting tonight in this wonderful peace,
Resting sweetly in Jesus' control;
For I'm kept from all danger by night and by day,
And His glory is flooding my soul!

Refrain

And I think when I rise to that city of peace,
Where the Anchor of peace I shall see,
That one strain of the song which the ransomed will sing
In that heavenly kingdom will be:

Refrain

Ah, soul! are you here without comfort and rest,
Marching down the rough pathway of time?
Make Jesus your Friend ere the shadows grow dark;
O accept of this peace so sublime!

Refrain

Far away in the depths of my spirit tonight Rolls a melody sweeter than psalm; In celestial strains it unceasingly falls O'er my soul like an infinite calm. Those old sweet melodies that our mothers sang when we were young (in far away times) evoke sentiments of peace and love; and particularly those that appealed to biblical truth. When the mad world overwhelms the soul with its pretensions, hypocrisy, cruelty and carnal exertions, the Christian enjoys an uninterrupted peace in the very depths of his soul where such aggravations cannot intrude. When stormy billows of the soul arise, the Christian can settle into that sweet and celestial melody that God has placed in the heart of all who love Him. This thought is fully expressed in another old hymn, *There's within my Heart a Melody.*" God does, indeed, put a beautiful melody in our hearts. No one can hear that melody but its owner. The melody drowns out the discordant strains of the world, and puts our hearts at peace with God and with ourselves in the same way that the gurgling could not be heard of the underground river at Shechem.

Refrain

Peace, peace, wonderful peace, Coming down from the Father above! Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray In fathomless billows of love! That Peace God showers down upon us is not contingent on the circumstances of the world or our present environment. The peace of God transcends all else. We may find ourselves in the heat of desperate combat on a blood-soaked battlefield, but the peace of God may still rule in the heart of the Christian warrior – even if tied to a burning stake as were many of our Reformers. It is THAT kind of peace that comes over us in the midst of our most trying moments – just as the billows and breakers of a restless sea. That peace of God breaks over us and covers us with the waters of love and comfort even as all around seems a mass of confusion. Would you like an example?

Let us consider the life (and martyrdom) of one of the earliest Christian Reformers – John Huss – who advocated *Solo Scriptura* – Scripture Alone in Faith:

In November 1414, the Council of Constance assembled, and Huss was urged by Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to come and give an account of his doctrine. Because he was promised safe

conduct, and because of the importance of the council (which promised significant church reforms), Huss went. When he arrived, however, he was immediately arrested, and he remained imprisoned for months. Instead of a hearing, Huss was eventually hauled before authorities in chains and asked merely to recant his views.

When he saw he wasn't to be given a forum for explaining his ideas, let alone a fair hearing, he finally said, "I appeal to Jesus Christ, the only judge who is almighty and completely just. In his hands I plead my cause, not on the basis of false witnesses and erring councils, but on truth and justice." He was taken to his cell, where many pleaded with him to recant. On July 6, 1415, he was taken to the cathedral, dressed in his priestly garments, then stripped of them one by one. He refused one last chance to recant at the stake, where he prayed, "Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies." He was heard reciting the Psalms as the flames engulfed him. (Christian History)

The peace that came over the soul of John Huss was the kind of peace the world cannot offer. IT is the kind of peace described by the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Phil 4:7)

What a treasure I have in this wonderful peace, Buried deep in the heart of my soul, So secure that no power can mine it away, While the years of eternity roll! One point concerning the peace that God grants is this: It is not a temporary peace, but an ETERNAL one! Of course it is so, because the soul that knows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior never dies. The world cannot get at the heart's treasure chest to steal away or to mar that peace buried deep in the heart of the soul. Not only the years, but the decades, the centuries, and millennia roll by while this peace is not diminished even an iota – and even eternities of light-years roll by.

I am resting tonight in this wonderful peace, Resting sweetly in Jesus' control; For I'm kept from all danger by night and by day, And His glory is flooding my soul! The only means that we can enjoy that peace to its fullest is to insure that it is the Lord who is in control of our lives and not our own unholy wills. Jesus Christ is our Sabbath Rest. He is our all in all. As Paul says, once more: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (Acts 17:28) In moments of loneliness or despair, I have often resorted to hymn-singing and, suddenly, find my heart is rejoicing in that melody that God placed in my heart at His first Calling.

And I think when I rise to that city of peace, Where the Anchor of peace I shall see, That one strain of the song which the ransomed will sing In that heavenly kingdom will be: The author here makes reference to the refrain of this hymn expounded above. What is that Anchor of Peace? Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (Heb 6:19-20) The good man, Rev William Arnot, described 150 years ago, that way in which that Anchor holds a sailing vessel. *When the gale winds arise and the billows break against the broadsides of our ship, we drop anchor, furl the sails, and turn the bow, head-on, into the storm. The anchor holds and the ship endures. So does our souls when anchored to that Anchor of Peace and Hope which is Jesus Christ. The Anchor holds because it is set in that Great Rock of the Deep, Jesus Christ!*

Ah, soul! are you here without comfort and rest, Marching down the rough pathway of time? Make Jesus your Friend ere the shadows grow dark; O accept of this peace so sublime! What a tragedy that the greater number of aged men and women of this world languish in sorrow and misery as the shadows of life lengthen and the darkness looms before them as a coming night of terror! They have not known the Lord as their Refuge, and go off to their "long homes" in fear and trembling of that which awaits them beyond the grave. Even the midnight hour is better than no time at all to accept the call of Jesus as Lord

and Savior. But how much more efficacious for the soul to respond to His call early in life while seed time and harvest remain. The Psalmist gets it right: *O God, thou art my God; **early will I seek thee**: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* (Psalms 63:1-2)

Early is better, but late is better than never at all.