



13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (1 Cor 16:13)

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:16-18)

Rise Up, O Men of God

Text: William P. Merrill, 1867-1954

Music: William H. Walter, 1825-1893

*Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things.
Give heart and mind and soul and strength
to serve the King of kings.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
The kingdom tarries long.
Bring in the day of brotherhood
and end the night of wrong.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait,
her strength unequal to her task;
rise up, and make her great!*

Lift high the cross of Christ!

*Tread where his feet have trod.
As brothers of the Son of Man,
rise up, O men of God!*

Though often used as an ordination hymn, this hymn has application to every man, woman and child of faith. Its relevance crosses all lines of age and gender. We are not to be cowardly or reticent in performing our duties of obeisance to our Mighty Sovereign, the King of Kings. The Truth of the Gospel is our shield and buckler. Why should we cringe in servitude to mammon or worldly powers when we have so glorious a birthright in Christ? The whole of the hymn could be defined in the exhortation of Ezekiel to Israel whose priests and prophets had profaned the Word of God and gone lusting after money power and strange and erroneous doctrines. *“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”* (Ezek 22:23-30)

The first stanza of this great hymn is a re-phrasing of Deuteronomy 6:5 (see also Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, & Luke 10:27): *“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”* (Deut 6:5) This is not a call to passive love, but to a courageously active and valorous love that will sustain us at our moment of crossing the turbulent Waters of our final River Jordan into the Face and Presence of Christ. The demands of politics, government, lucre, sensual attractions – these all take flight in face of our love and steadfast loyalty to our Redeemer King, Jesus! Those lesser things of appeal to the soul of the weakling do not appeal to the heart that has found refuge in Christ.

*Rise up, O men of God!
The kingdom tarries long.
Bring in the day of brotherhood
and end the night of wrong.*

“In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night” (Prov 7:9), the Kingdom of God has taken slow progress because the laborers who have been called and paid in the coin of the realm have not done their works of love and steadfast living to Christ. When the shadows lengthen and the soul is still, it is a time to seek the face of God – not to seek to do wickedness believing that our sins are hidden, for no thing is hidden from the All-Seeing Eye of God our Maker. The “brotherhood” mentioned is not a relationship between men and women of faith to those of the world, but a brotherhood in the family of God. Those of the world are not our brothers, but are of the family of the Dark Prince of the Air.

*Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait,
her strength unequal to her task;
rise up, and make her great!*

There has never been a time of such apostasy and wickedness of the people of America than at this present moment. The Church is a great ship foundering on the shoals and breakers of false doctrine and impure hearts. This ship cannot be righted of her own strength. She needs men and women of backbone and principle to undergird her ballasts of truth, and deploy her Main Sail of the Holy Spirit. Christ is her Pilot who beckons to all hands on Board, "To duty stations!" But they have not heard, neither have they obeyed. Rise UP! "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock!**" (Rev 3:20a) The hour is late for America (and the world). Christ is very near in this late night hour. He is even at the Door and knocks. If we heed not that knock, what hope is there for any? To the blind and timid ministers of our day Christ calls out: "**Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.**" (John 4:35-36)

*Lift high the cross of Christ!
Tread where his feet have trod.
As brothers of the Son of Man,
rise up, O men of God!*

It is a great joy to follow Christ along the placid and beautiful shores of the Galilean Sea; or along His steps to Jacob's Well; to the Coast of Sidon; to the great Mount of Transfiguration; to the home of despondent Jairus to witness the touch of Christ upon his precious daughter who lay dead and yet lived at the Master's command; and, finally, to that sorrowful tomb of Lazarus outside Bethany - following our loving Master in His mountain sojourns is so sweet, is it not? But wait! Looms ahead another mount! The earth trembles and the sky darkens over that Mount Calvary that sealed His Redemption of His people. If we will enjoy the benefits of faith and love, we must also bear life's crosses which are of Christ. "**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.**" (Luke 9:23) Following in the steps of Jesus lead us into wonderful fields of joy, but also into painful moments of hurt and sacrifice. If we faint at the sacrifice, we can never experience the joys. A few years ago, I wrote a poem that, though less than perfect in so many ways, nonetheless describes my impression of following those steps of Christ:

Following Those Prints

*Once on a day of Joyful Beauty and air pristine
I happened on the trail, at Jordan's Banks, where our Lord had trod,
And saw there in the stony edge a gleam
The footprints of his nail-pierced feet upon the sod.*

*Along the shore of Galilee's coast
A fishing boat with sides weathered by the tempest's blast
Lay anchored now in quiet repose
Silent witness to the Stormy past.*

Onward down the River Valley green

*The Footprints led to Bethany
And on the way an opened Tomb
Whose owner rose as beckoned lovingly.*

*On across the western plains to Sychar's well
That Jacob dug for all to quench a thirst
The prints paused briefly for a Woman Lost
Mixed there with others who came as did the first.*

*Quite steady on the prints led to the Temple Mount
Where tables, overturned in fury hot,
At which the money changers made their count
And fled the Master's blistering reproach of all their lot.*

*Straight on the steps led through the narrow Way
To Pilate's seat foreboding, proud and dark,
Past judgment seat where Peter thrice on that last Day
Denied his love for Christ and missed the mark.*

*Now haltingly they merge on Dolorosa's rocky lane
Where Jesus bore His heavy cross alone
Up Calvary's granite slopes of Crimson Stain
Where last He bled and for our sins atoned.*

*From out the tomb in Garden fair and sweet
The prints led on to Glory high and Great
And up beyond the heavens' pearl-decked gates
He now commands the hearts of all of Faith.*

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As a minister of God (and ALL are ministers in the way of sharing Christ and faith) we shall have a great reward, not only in the manner in which we live our lives for Christ, but in the manner and spirit in which we depart on our final passage. In those immortal words of Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar" (which is also a hymn):

*SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
.....
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face*

When I have crossed the bar.

I say these words are immortal, not because they are divinely spoken by the great Tennyson, but spoken out of a due and humble regard for the DIVINE Pilot who steers our vessel on the Seas of Life (and of our final sleep). May our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, keep our hearts stayed on Him and obedient to His Commandment of Love until that fateful night when we shall "put out upon the Eternal Sea."