**MY JESUS, I LOVE THEE**

I John 4:19 “*We love Him because He first loved us*.”

William Featherston was 16 years old when he confessed Jesus as Lord and sought to change his life and live as a Christian. That was 1862. Two years later He became so moved by what Jesus had done for him that he wrote a poem about his love for the Savior. He died just a few years later at age 26 in 1873. He never knew his poem would become a hymn sung world-wide for the next 150 years. We sing it often at Northwest, and it is one of my favorite hymns.

Let me tell you why I love it so much. It has four stanzas and tells us of four periods of our life, each of which causes the grateful disciple to feel deep emotion for what Jesus has done for him or her. Look at each one and see if it moves you as much as me.

**My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou, If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now.**

1) *At Conversion*. Do you remember the day you became a Christian? Repentance is the turning point where you turn in your resignation with Satan, and make a resolution with Jesus. You *resigned* the follies of sin, and *resolved* then and there that from this day forward Jesus would become “my gracious Redeemer, my Savior!” In baptism you were then washed of all your sins and raised to walk a new life (Rom. 6:3-7). Dripping wet from the baptistry you feel, and whisper,

“If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now!”

**I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me. And purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree.  
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thou brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now.**

2) *At The Lord’s Table*. Here we see the obvious reference to I John 4:19 that dominated this teenager’s thoughts as he penned this poem. “*We love Him because He first loved us*.”

To be my Redeemer requires stepping up with a “purchase” price. On Calvary’s tree Jesus wrote “*Paid In Full*” across my impossible debt I had amassed with all my sins. I was the one who was 10,000 talents in the red in Jesus’ story of Matthew 18. Just as the Master had shown grace and mercy, not delaying the debt, but wiping it clean, so Jesus, by wearing the crown of thorns in crucifixion had rescued me from the fires of hell. It is each week as we gather to eat the bread and drink the cup that we once again remember what our Lord did for us. Each week we whisper to ourselves:

“If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now?”

**I’ll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death. And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath.  
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now.**

3) *At Life’s End*. No one has likely ever said on their death-bed, “I wish I had spent more time at the office,” or, “I regret I didn’t gamble more or win the lottery.” If we are at all rational we are thinking of our eternal destiny and setting our house in order to be ready to meet our Maker.

A life lived for Jesus will end with no regrets. *“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”* (Rev 14:13)

This 16 year old teenager was remembering God in the days of his youth (Eccl. 12:1). He was wisely saying, “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Phil. 1:21). On his deathbed, just 11 years later, I can almost hear him whisper,

“If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus is now!”

**In mansions of glory and endless delight. I’ll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright.  
I’ll sing with the glittering crown on my brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now.**

4) *At Heaven’s Gate*. The imagination nearly runs wild at the thought of (to coin another hymn) *How Beautiful Heaven Must Be*. John wrote that Jesus promised after He left He would go to heaven to “*prepare a place for you*.” (John 14:1-3). Revelation describes this “mansions of glory and endless delight” in chapter 21:22-26,

22 *But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it*.”

It is then, and there, in heaven so bright, we will “ever adore Thee” (read Rev. 4-5).

It is then, and there, I’ll sing with the glittering crown on my brow – not a crown of thorns, but a different crown - “*when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”* (I Peter 5:4). When our Savior is placing that crown on our head, it is then we will no longer whisper, but shout:

“If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus tis now!”

Till tomorrow… I love Jesus. And, I love you.

Rick