**FAVORITE HYMNS**

***Blessed Assurance***

One day in 1873 two dear friends were visiting each other, enjoying one another’s company as they talked about two of their loves in life. One was music, the other was Jesus Christ. The first friend was Phoebe Palmer Knapp, the wife of Joseph F. Knapp, founder of Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. The other was Frances Jane Crosby van Alstyne (aka Fanny Crosby).

That day a new organ was being installed in Mrs. Knapp’s house, so she went to her piano and played a tune. After playing she said, “Fanny, what does that music say to you?” Instantly she replied, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.” That very day in 1873 she wrote the entire three stanzas of *Blessed Assurance* that has become one of the most cherished hymns in Christian music. But let’s first go back in time to learn how that famous song came to us.

Fanny Crosby was born on March 24, 1820 in Brewster, NY. At just six weeks old she was diagnosed with an eye infection and the doctor applied a hot poultice on her eyelids. The little baby’s optic nerves were damaged and she was soon blinded. She was to live the next 94 years in darkness. Added to her misfortune was the sad death of her father when she was just six months old. Her mother (Mercy) and grandmother (Eunice) had to raise this handicapped child the best they could. It was her grandmother who took on the role of educating Fanny, becoming her eyes to the world. She read the Bible to her every day and they spent much time in prayer. A biographer later said that from the age of 10 she would memorize five chapters of the Bible each week. By the age of 15 she had memorized the four gospels, the five books of the Pentateuch, the book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and many of the Psalms.

Whew! I’m embarrassed. At 15 I could only quote “Roses are red, violets are blue, a spider’s on your head, hand me my shoe.”

She had a seemingly inborn ability to compose poetry and songs. In her lifetime, which spanned the lives of John Adams & Thomas Jefferson (she was six when they died) to the boyhood of Ronald Reagan (she was ninety when he was born), she composed over 1000 secular poems, four published books of poetry, many patriotic songs, five cantatas, and over 8000 spiritual hymns! In her autobiography she said, “It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me.” She then said, “When I get to heaven the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!”

Among her thousands of hymns you will likely recognize a few that we sing often:  *To God Be The Glory*, *I Am Thine O Lord, Jesus Is Tenderly Calling, Near The Cross, Praise Him Praise Him, Rescue The Perishing, Tell Me The Story of Jesus, All The Way My Savior Leads Me*, *Safe In The Arms Of Jesus*.

But let’s return to our hymn *Blessed Assurance*.

Ira Sankey, musician for Dwight Moody’s evangelistic crusades, wrote that during The First Boer War (1880-1881), in which the British fought in South Africa, that as the soldier boys marched past one another going back and forth to the front lines, they would shout: “Four-nine-four boys; Four-nine-four,” and would hear the reply: “Six-further-on boys; Six-further-on.” What did that mean? In the midst of war, when many died daily, they used a hymn book to find comfort and courage. In that hymn book were numbers 494 (*God Be With You Till We Meet Again*), and 500 – which was six pages further on in the book (*Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine*). Those are certainly hymns that would give me greater faith facing death.

What I love about the hymn *Blessed Assurance* is the use of our senses to enrich our faith in salvation, or what Ms. Crosby calls “glory divine.” Study the words carefully and see what I mean:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

Perfect submission, perfect delight, Visions of rapture now burst on my sight
Angels descending, bring from above, Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blessed
Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long
This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long

The Christian has confidence (“blessed assurance”) because He has Jesus, who is his Redeemer (purchased of God – Eph. 1:14). At baptism he was born again, being washed in Christ’s blood and made heir of salvation (Jn. 3:3-5, Ac 22:16; Mk. 16:16).

In heaven there will be perfect submission, perfect delight. Why? This is where our senses come into play. We will see wonderous things. When we get to heaven visions that are now beyond expression will burst on our sight. We will hear wonderous things. Echoes and whispers of mercy and love will resound all over heaven by not only the angels, but all the redeemed of all the ages! The third sense is that of taste, for what we will one day see and hear is now only in our hearts as a “foretaste of glory divine.”

My prayer today is that all of us who are struggling through this unprecedented period of isolation from one another will pause to sing this hymn with me. I hope it will do for you what it does for me, fan into flame the passion of living for Christ. Sing it loud and long - ***Jesus is mine***! With that confidence, that blessed assurance, live your life today in faith and hope that your salvation is secured!

Until tomorrow… Make that your story, make that your song!

I love you so much. Rick