

A Hymn for Today¹

Have you noticed that more and more Christians are rediscovering the hymns of the past? Even young adults are showing a preference for old songs with profound theology rather than the shallow and repetitive choruses found in contemporary Christian music. The Bible reminds us of the power and importance of singing and giving thanks. Paul wrote:

¹⁸And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit: ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord, ²⁰giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.²

The Greeks used the word “hymnos” (hoom'-nos) or “hymn” in praise of their gods, heroes, and conquerors. We use it in Christianity as a sacred praise to God. These songs are theologically rich, captivating the peoples' hearts and stirring their emotions.

One such song for our era is the 1745 “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah,” written by the little-known William Williams, the Welsh poet credited with composing over 900 hymns. None is more impactful than this one.

Williams grew up in South Wales and attended a “nonconformist church” that had parted ways with the Church of England. Several denominations wore that label, including the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists.

Williams didn't credit his childhood church with his conversion but rather a preacher and teacher named Howell Harris, whom he overheard preaching in a cemetery about the coming judgment. William had intended to become a physician. Instead, he entered the Ministry as a Methodist preacher to help lead the Welsh Revival. Pastor Harris asked Williams to write hymns for the church, which he happily did. Pastor Williams borrowed from Exodus and Joshua to write the song “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah,” which reflected the many challenges the pastor faced as he traveled and preached. Listen to the words (I promise I won't sing!).

*Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land:
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of Heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.*

While he may have a circuit-riding preacher in mind, the hymn appeals to us because we are all pilgrims through a land barren of the gospel. America has joined the ranks of apostate Israel. As the prophet told them, he tells us, “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**”³ We need the presence, protection, and direction of God Himself. Williams goes on in the next stanza:

¹ The basis of this is from: Batura, Paul. "The 1745 Hymn We Desperately Need to Sing in 2024." *Daily Citizen*, Focus on the Family, 26 Jan. 2024, dailycitizen.focusonthefamily.com/the-1745-hymn-we-desperately-need-to-sing-in-2024/?sfid=0034W00003MuMa0QAF&refed=1999501. Accessed 2 Feb. 2024.

² Ephesians 5:18-21 (CSB)

³ Hosea 4:6 (NKJV)

*Open now the crystal fountain
When the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.*

While everything in our world seems to be falling apart, as believers, we have a hope that goes beyond this life. The final verse speaks of the triumphal entry of the Hebrews into the Promised Land with an application to our glorious entrance into the heavenly presence of God. That verse reads:

*When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of deaths, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Song of Praises,
I will ever give to thee.*

Evil is at every turn and in every facet of life. The enemy has distorted everything that God set in place, and too many have gone along rather than resist his oppression. As a result, anxiety runs high today, even for people of faith. But we know the Lord's sovereign will prevails. This fact brings us strength and solace.

Joseph Warren (June 11, 1741-June 17, 1775) was an American revolutionary patriot and physician who sent **Paul Revere** on his midnight ride to Lexington, warning of the British advance. Warren was killed in the **Battle of Bunker Hill** on June 17, 1775, and the Bunker Hill Memorial was erected where he fell. On March 5, 1772, the second anniversary of the **Boston Massacre**, Dr. Warren delivered a commemorative speech. Listen to this portion and his confidence in the Lord.

If you perform your part, you must have the strongest confidence that the same Almighty Being who protected your pious and venerable forefathers, who enabled them to turn a barren wilderness into a fruitful field, who so often made bare His arm for their salvation, will still be mindful of you, their offspring. May this Almighty Being graciously preside in all our councils. May He direct us to such measures as He Himself shall approve and be pleased to bless. May our land be a land of liberty, the seat of virtue, the asylum of the oppressed, a name and a praise in the whole earth, until the last shock of time shall bury the empires of the world in one common undistinguishable ruin!

Let's close with these words from King David:

**The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?
²When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell.
³Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident.⁴**

Keep The Light of God's Guidance Burning!

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⁴ Psalm 27:1-3 (NKJV)