

“MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE”

“My Faith Looks Up to Thee” is a beautiful hymn written in 1832 by Ray Palmer, a lonely and discouraged teacher. In his despair he recorded his sentiments in a poem he never intended for anyone else to see. Months later Ray shared his poem with Dr. Lowell Mason who was publishing a hymnal. The words so impressed Dr. Mason that he set them to music and called the song “Oliver.”

When we sing “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” we admit we have problems. We request in Verse One that the Lord would, “Take all my guilt away.” We indicate in Verse Two that we have a fainting heart and admit in Verse Four to having fear and distrust. We confess in Verse Three, “I tread life’s dark maze” and later request that the Lord, “Bid darkness turn to day.” We acknowledge in Verse Three, “...grief around me spread...” and request that the Lord “...wipe sorrows’ tears away...” Unless we give our hurts and fears to Jesus, who endures hostility for us, our souls will become weary (cf. Hebrews 12:3)

Amos Wells tells the story of eight Civil War soldiers who met in a tent for prayer prior to a bloody battle. They decided to write messages to their relatives in case they died the next day. Struggling with what to write, they agreed to simply place their signatures on a copy of the hymn, “My Faith Looks Up to Thee.” The next day seven of those soldiers died in battle. Their faith vividly illustrated the hymn’s closing stanza: “When ends life’s transient dream, when death’s cold, sullen stream shall o’er me roll, blest Savior, then, in love, fear and distrust remove; O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul.”

When we sing “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” we acknowledge our Savior. We acknowledge in Verse One, “My Faith looks up to Thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.” We acknowledge Jesus’ death for us in Verse Two as we sing, “As Thou has died for me...” (See Romans 5:8). We acknowledge our love for the Lord (Verse Two, “O may my love to Thee pure warm and changeless be—a living fire”). Our Savior is our only hope for heavenly homeland in a city prepared for us (Hebrews 11:13-16).

When we sing, “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” we plead for the Lord’s help. We plead to the Lord that we can be kept from straying (see Verse Three) for the temptation to stray from truth is strong (cf. I Timothy 4:1). We plead for redemption and a home with the Lord in glory (See Verse Four, “O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul”).

Does your faith look up to God or around at worldly temptation? Jesus was tempted in all points like us and did not sin. In every situation that we find ourselves, Christ has been there, too.

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Whenever, we are blessed by worshipping God in song we should, really we must, to be pleasing to God, sing “*with the spirit and the understanding*” (I Corinthians 14:15).

--adapted by: Bill Richardson