

*The Power  
Of  
Music*



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## The Power of Music

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Music is one of the most powerful, motivational forces in the world. There have been world leaders in the past who have claimed that if they were allowed to write the songs for a country they could mold and shape it to their own liking. Music is that powerful. It reaches down inside our hearts and touches us in ways that we find difficult to explain. We are alright at a funeral until the music starts and then we become teary eyed. The sound tracks on the movies we watch shape the emotional impact of the action on the screen.

It is no wonder that music has always been an important part of the church. Songs have the ability to motivate us and compel us into action. Songs remind us of the beauty of life and the wonder of creation. Songs lift us up when we are down and they skip along with us when we are happy.

Christian music is most compel-

ling when it explores the awesome power of God. It has the power to melt a stony heart when it portrays the suffering and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian music can instill within us the will to Stand Up for Jesus. It can remind us of how sweet and how heavenly it is when those who love the Lord walk together in one accord.

In this issue of BC we want to look at the stories behind a few of the beloved hymns that we sing. Gary Colley shares with us the heartbreaking tragedy behind that old hymn of comfort and strength, *It Is Well With My Soul*. Ryan Lefleur reminds us that we need not be too concerned about what tomorrow holds as long as we know who holds tomorrow. Bruce Langham encourages us to rely on Blessed Assurance and not on our confidence in men. Sing along and enjoy the story behind the song. ...lsg



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*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 blest,  
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.*

Often the themes for Fanny Crosby's texts were by musician friends who would first compose the music and then ask Fanny for matching words. Such was the prompting for the hymn "Blessed Assurance". One day Mrs. Joseph (Phoebe) Knapp, who was an amateur musician, and a close personal friend, visited Fanny in her New York home.

"Oh Fanny, I've had a new melody racing through my mind for some time now, and I just can't think of anything else. Let me play it for you and perhaps you can help me with the words."

After kneeling in prayer and clutching her little Bible, the blind poetess stood to her feet with face aglow: "Why, that music says, 'Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine.'"

We read where the psalmist David said to trust in The Lord and not the confidence of man. Fanny Crosby may not have had Psalms 118: 8 in her mind, but she still matched what David said. They both had Blessed Assurance. They both relied on the character, ability, strength, and truth of the Lord. David was not blind but trusted in the Lord. Fanny was blind and trusted in the Lord. So what is our excuse for worry, self doubt and other ailments of our time? Perhaps, we are running on the confidence of man when we should be running on "Blessed Assurance".

**Psalms 118: 8: It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.**

...Bruce Langham  
Fort Smith, Arkansas

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## “Blessed Assurance”

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Most of us have sung songs written by Fanny Crosby whether we know it or not. As a song leader, I have noticed we sometimes sing the words of a song much like a quick meal at lunch. We hurry to get through so we can get on to the next item on our schedule. We may not realize the love and care the person who prepared our lunch put into this task. The right amount of grapes or chips to go with our sandwich or just enough mayo and/or mustard? We just eat and go on with our day. Maybe we should look a little harder at the words and music we sing in praise to our God and not treat them as a quick lunch.

Fanny Crosby became blind at six weeks of age through improper medical treatment. About her blindness, she said: *It seemed in-tend-ed by the bless-ed prov-i-dence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dis-pen-sation. If per-fer-ect earth-ly sight were of-fered me to-mor-row I would not ac-cept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been dis-tract-ed by the beau-ti-ful and in-ter-est-ing things about me.*

Fanny Crosby knew her blindness was not a mistake but an

opportunity to serve the Lord. She seemed to take what most of us would consider a disaster and turned it into "*bless-ed prov-i-dence*" from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One day I was working on a lesson from Psalms 118 and I read verse 8 of this Psalm which says: **It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.** I looked up "trust" in Webster's Dictionary and came up with the following definition: **Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.** I then looked up the word "confidence" which means: **A feeling or consciousness of one's powers or of reliance on one's circumstances.** Both sounded similar until I got to one word in the last definition, this word being "circumstances". Between the two, the term "assured reliance" was the definition I really liked. It was then I thought about the song "Blessed Assurance".

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

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## “It Is Well With My Soul”

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The untimely death of a loved one is one of the most difficult things in life to grasp and to understand, especially when the loved one is a Christian. Unless a person has experienced similar situations, there is no way to fully understand their grief. Reading the Psalms gives us insight into David's feelings about life, and gives us a greater understanding, not only of his relationship with GOD, but ours as well. Songs, such as "It is Well With my Soul", have a similar effect as the Psalms in bringing our emotions to light.

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**Unless a person has experienced similar situations, there is no way to fully understand their grief.**

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The story behind this song is one of deep tragedy and great faith, written by a man in total despair and looking to GOD for comfort and understanding. It is said that Horatio G. Spafford penned this song after passing the site where his children died at sea in a shipwreck. Recent events in South Korea and the wailing of the loved ones brings chill bumps as we sympathize being

parents and grandparents. The current events also help bring to the surface Horatio's sorrow in his great loss. Earlier Horatio had sent his wife and four children ahead to Europe, planning to meet them later. He originally was going with them, but was detained by a business emergency. He received a telegram from his wife, Anna, stating, "Saved alone, what should I do?" He left Chicago immediately taking the next ship to meet his grieving wife. The captain of the ship sent word to him as they were passing over the site where the ship went down and at that time Spafford penned his feelings, although some think that he wrote this song from the words of the Shunammite woman as Gehazi questioned her reason for hurrying to see Elisha (2 Kings 4:26).

This story reminds me of Job. Horatio Spafford was a wealthy man that had dedicated his life to Christ. So was Job. Spafford and his wife, Anna, had five children and their only son, Horatio Jr., died of scarlet fever at the age of four. A few months after their son's death the Great Chicago Fire wiped out most of their wealth, but their home was not burned. The family continued to work for the

Lord by opening their home to others whose homes had burned. The trip to Europe was driven in part by Anna's declining health after the loss of their son. It was also intended to assist in an evangelistic mission. Why would such a thing happen to a Christian family? The story about this family doesn't end after he wrote this song! He and Anna had three more children, two daughters and a son, but as his brother before him, the second son died of scarlet fever at the age of four. Sources indicate many people whispered that the Spaffords must have had secret sins, thus the reason for so much tragedy in their life; this is another similarity to Job. Only God knows about the sinfulness of the Spaffords, but we know that Job's suffering was not related to his sinfulness.

Now that we know Horatio's heavyheartedness, let's look at the words he wrote that have developed into one of our more familiar Christian hymns that is listed under the category of "Comfort" in some hymnbooks.

The first verse:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, /When sorrows like sea billows roll; /Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, /It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Chorus:

It is well, with my soul, /It is well, with my soul, /It is well, it is well, with my soul.

A person doesn't have to live a very long life to realize this world is filled with disappointments and heartache. The Bible is our greatest resource for comfort, but because the promises are so great and contrary to our sinful nature, it is difficult for us to put our complete trust in the word. The scripture tells us in Romans 10:17, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." It also tells us to exercise such faith in communication with our LORD:

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### **The Bible is our greatest resource for comfort...**

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"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:4-7 NIV).

Certainly peace in Spafford's situation passes all human un-

## **"I Know Who Holds Tomorrow"**

"I Know Who Holds Tomorrow" is a very familiar hymn in our songbooks. It was written by Ira Stanphill during the 1950's.

Ira Stanphill was born on February 14, 1914. He was an outstanding talent on the Christian music scene. He traveled throughout the United States and in 40 countries, preaching and singing the songs that he had written. He began his career by singing on local radio and wrote his first Christian song as a teenager.

In 1936, Ira launched his first revival campaign, which concluded with him becoming a minister at a congregation in Springfield, Missouri. In Springfield, he met his future wife, Zelma Lawson. They exchanged wedding vows in 1939. They collaborated to write the song "Room at the Cross for You" as a duet.

However, their marriage tragically ended in a divorce. In 1951, Zelma died in a car accident. Between the divorce and Zelma's death, Ira had reached a low in his personal life.

But, Ira poured out his feelings to God. He was driving to a church service one day and had

a new song in his heart. This experience did not give him all the answers he wanted, but it helped him to have total trust in God.

Ira went on to write "I Know who Holds Tomorrow." The words we sing "Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand; but I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand," became a mainstay in Ira's fresh faith in the Lord.

When I think about "I Know who Holds Tomorrow," I think about our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no telling what kind of feelings Ira must have had when he wrote this song and all 500 songs in his repertoire. We can sympathize with Ira because he experienced real problems that caused great pain in his life. We all have to experience pain and difficulties in this earthly life. But, if we remain faithful to the Lord, we will find our "Mansion over the Hilltop." We do not know what tomorrow holds for us in our lives, but we know who holds our hand. And that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

...Ryan Lefleur  
Greenwood, Arkansas

be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The LORD loves us beyond any love we have known and if we continue to keep the faith, it will be well with our soul. As we go through life and face challenges, we may want to keep 1 Corinthians 15:58 in mind, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

...Gary Colley

Mansfield, Arkansas

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***How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,***

***When those that love the Lord***

***In one another's peace delight,***

***And so fulfill the Word.***

***When each can feel his brother's sigh,***

***And with him bear a part;***

***When sorrow flows from eye to eye,***

***And joy from heart to heart.***

***Love is the golden chain that binds***

***The happy souls above;***

***And he's an heir of heav'n who finds***

***His bosom glow with love.***

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derstanding. We can see he was not without great sorrow like sea billows rolling. If we had perfect faith, we could rejoice even in this situation believing the LORD had taken them home and they were no longer subject to the temptations this world brings. Spafford's sorrow was not like others, with no hope, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep."

For those of us with little faith we ask our LORD for more faith. "'If you can,' said Jesus, 'everything is possible for him who believes.' Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'" (Mk 9:23-24).

Wouldn't it be wonderful if those of us with little faith could use such songs to motivate us to prayerfully read and meditate on the Word? We have the re-

sources to face the struggles common to man with rejoicing faith realizing our LORD is in complete control. The comfort of believing the promises of our LORD should indeed make anything we face in this world well with our souls.

Second verse:

Though Satan should buffet,  
though trials should come, /  
Let this blest assurance control, /  
That Christ has regarded my  
helpless estate, /  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

This verse is actually left out of some hymnals. Our lack of knowledge of the scriptures does make this verse hard to reconcile. Considering our comparison of Job to this family helps us understand and gives us comfort. Job was a righteous man blessed by GOD. He gave credit to GOD for blessing him with much, as well as taking everything away. It is very important to understand that GOD gives us everything and it is under GOD's control to take it away. It is true that GOD granted Satan permission to take what Job had, and Satan gladly took advantage, but GOD is in control. Here we have a perfect and upright man suffering these horrible things, which seem to go against the core of our view of GOD, if indeed we get our ideas

of GOD from non-scriptural sources. Why would GOD do such a thing for no apparent reason? We do not always know the “why” but we should know the “who”. In the case of Job we do know the why and amazingly GOD brought a great joy to Job when his horrible suffering was completed. Notice Job’s response to GOD in Job 42:1-6, “Then Job replied to the LORD: ‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, “Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?” Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, “Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.” My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.’”

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### **Why would GOD do such a thing for no apparent reason?**

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Job knew a lot more about GOD than I know, but this passage indicates there was so much more that Job could learn and he was not depressed but he was excited to know more about GOD. This sounds like the psalmist in Psalms 119:71, “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your de-

crees.” Paul made a similar statement in Philippians 3:7-11, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

The thought of experiencing what Job and Paul experienced is scary, but they both thought it little and well worth it to know more about GOD. In fact, Paul was ready for more if he could attain resurrection, but to this point only our LORD Jesus has attained resurrection.

When Jesus was facing such suffering, as perhaps hell itself, HE wanted us to have His “joy”. We read in John 17:13, “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy

within them.”

Third verse:

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! /My sin, not in part but the whole, /Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, / Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

The horribleness of examining ourselves in light of the scriptures is only exceeded by the joy that our debt was paid in full by our LORD Jesus. Therefore we should bring praise and honor to him constantly in our lives. Whatever heartache the LORD brings our way won’t scratch the surface of the suffering He went through to save our souls. There is great comfort to know that He loves us and only sends our way what we, or some other loved one, need to be with Him forever.

Fourth verse:

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, /The clouds be rolled back as a scroll; /The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, / Even so, it is well with my soul.

Such scriptures as 2 Peter 3:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 look forward to and ask for hastening of the day when we shall be with the LORD. Spafford’s words were inspired by his sorrow for

his loved ones. Many times we are distracted by the temporary things of this world, such as Spafford’s need to stay behind for business and send his family on the journey without him. However, by prayerfully reading and studying His word, as well as seeing Him in the creation and in the circumstances of our lives, we come to recognize the value of our LORD in building the faith we need.

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### **Many times we are distracted by the temporary things of this world...**

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Why did all this happen to the Spafford family? No one knows the “why” but our LORD; however, we do know the “who”. We do know this song is still being sung well over a hundred years since it was written and we are still discussing their name and their story. Most of us will not be mentioned a hundred years from now, yet this song is still sung today to give comfort to those facing difficult times.

In closing let’s look at 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 “I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all