
“Because He Lives”

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

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AT A GLANCE

We get our theology from scripture, not hymns or worship songs. But we treasure hymns and worship songs that bring our theology to life and make it memorable. That’s exactly what the hymn *Because He Lives* does for us! Join us as we explore the scriptural foundation upon which this hymn was written and why we have good reason to believe we can face tomorrow because He lives!

If you have been to church much, I’m sure you’ve heard that hymn we sang today, *Because He Lives*. But do you know why it’s true? Do you know how it’s supported by scripture? I thought it would be interesting to search the scriptures to see upon what the authors of this hymn, the Gaither’s, stake their claims.

I’d love to share that with you this morning so that you, too, can know the truthfulness of the claims – because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

Doug Little shares how the Gaither’s wrote this hymn,

“Gloria has shared in interviews how the song came to be written. She and Bill were nearing the date when their third child was to be born. Her mind was filled with fears about how this child and their other two children would be able to face life in the world which at that time was in real turmoil.

She writes her account: ‘I am a wife and a mother. It was in the middle of the upheaval in the ’60s that we were expecting our third baby. The drug culture was in full swing, existential thought had obviously saturated every area of our American thought, the cities were seething with racial tension, and the God-is-dead pronouncement had giggled its way all through our educational system.’

She explains that Bill had been down physically and emotionally with mononucleosis. They had been verbally attacked by a close friend for their Christian ministry. The stress on them was intense. Gloria continues:

‘It was on New Year’s Eve that I sat alone in the darkness and quiet of our living room, thinking about the world and our country and Bill’s discouragement and the family problems – and about our baby yet unborn. Who in their right mind would bring a child into a world like this? I thought. The world is so evil. Influences beyond our control are so strong. What will happen to this child? I can’t quite explain what happened at that moment, but suddenly I felt released from it all. The panic that had begun to build inside was gently dispelled by a reassuring presence that engulfed my life and drew my attention.

Gradually, the fear left and the joy began to return. I knew I could have that baby and face the future with optimism and trust. It was the Resurrection affirming itself in our lives once again. It was LIFE conquering death in the regularity of my day.”

I’ve never exegeted a hymn, and certainly do not want to confuse a hymn with scripture. The scripture is divinely inspired by God. Good hymns are inspired by scripture. That’s an important distinction.

We get our theology from the bible, not hymns or worship songs. But praise the Lord for hymns and worship songs that bring the Word to life! So let’s look at this hymn we’ve come to love and upon what scriptures it is founded.

Verse 1 God sent His son,

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16–17

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:3-4

They called Him, Jesus;

The angel of the Lord said to Joseph, *“You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21*

“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

He came to love, Heal and forgive;

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Romans 10:13

This is why Jesus said He came, *“...to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10*

How is that possible? How can a just God simply forgive our sin?

Paul words it like this, *“so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” in Romans 3:26*

Because *“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11*

He lived and died To buy my pardon,

“The Son of Man came...to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...” 1 Peter 2:24

The last words of Jesus on that tree, the cross, were *“It is finished.” John 19:30*

What? Striving for perfection. Working for righteousness. Righteousness is by faith in the One who died to buy your pardon.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

But how do we know for a fact that God received Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf? What proves it?

An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

“They found the stone rolled away... but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” Luke 24:2–3

The angel said to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, *“He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.”*
Matthew 28:5–6

It was not to Mary alone that Jesus appeared. The Apostle Paul tells us *“He appeared to Cephas...He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time... most of whom are still alive...”* *1 Corinthians 15:5-6*

Luke records that *“He presented himself alive...by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days...”* *Acts 1:3*

Now you may be skeptical of that claim. But I want you to see how these people acted on what they claimed.

Peter and John, when threatened by the religious authorities said, *“We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”* *Acts 4:20* Not what we want to believe.

Peter also wrote, *“We did not follow cleverly devised myths...but we were eyewitnesses...”* *2 Peter 1:16*

Plenty of people are willing to suffer and die for a lie they have been told and they believe. But who suffers and dies for a lie they made up?

When they suffered for His names sake they rejoiced... *“that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”* *Acts 5:41*

In 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 Paul catalogs relentless suffering for the gospel. Why would someone be willing to endure years of hardship and abuse and death if they were not assured they were suffering for the truth? Where does the assurance of our faith rest? The resurrection! Paul said that without the resurrection, our faith is futile, worthless. It’s all for nothing.

But, *“[God] has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”* *Acts 17:31*

Yes, the empty grave proves my Savior lives!

Verse 2 How sweet to hold A newborn baby, And feel the pride and joy he brings; but greater still the calm assurance: this child can face uncertain days because He lives!

Every generation has had tumultuous times and many wonder if it is wise to bring a child into the world in such a time. But the bible tells us, *“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.”* *Psalms 127:3*

And that God knows each of us even in the womb. *“You formed my inward parts... I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* *Psalms 139:13–14*

God is sovereign over our birth and the birth of our children and He’s got a plan for us all.

Therefore, we need not worry about the future our children will inherit. Instead, we’re called to trust the Lord.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” *Proverbs 3:5-6*

“Do not be anxious... the peace of God... will guard your hearts...” *Philippians 4:6–7*

“Peace I leave with you... Let not your hearts be troubled...” *John 14:27*

“Do not be anxious about tomorrow...” *Matthew 6:34*

What we know is God is faithful and He calls us to...

“Fear not, for I am with you... I will uphold you...” *Isaiah 41:10*

“I will not leave you or forsake you.” *Hebrews 13:5*

Even when we feel like the world around us is uncertain, *“...we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”* *Psalms 46:2-3*

Why not? Because, *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1*

We can say with David, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...” Psalm 23:4*

Yes, there is a calm assurance, because He lives!

Verse 3 *And then one day, I'll cross the river, I'll fight life's final War with pain;*

The bible does not ignore our present human suffering. The Christian faith is not a ‘grin and bear it’ faith. We don’t have to put up a front or put on a show. The truth is, *“...our outer self is wasting away...” 2 Corinthians 4:16–17*

In fact, *“The whole creation has been groaning...we ourselves...groan inwardly...” Romans 8:22–23*

Life wasn’t supposed to be like this. Our bodies, our societies, our planet, were not supposed to be broken. Cancer wasn’t supposed to be a thing. Sickness, grief, layoffs, accidents, tragedies, riots, theft, murder, none of those were part of the original creation.

They’re the result of the fall of mankind. Man chose to reject God and with that came death. Death in a million forms.

But one day, *“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:4*

What a comfort to know that one day all the pain we experience in this world will come to an end: physical pain, sickness, cancer, arthritis, diabetes, grief, mental anguish, stress, anxiety, hopelessness, fear, and regret will all perish.

One day we’ll fight life’s *final* war with pain.

And then, as death Gives way to victory,

Paul refers to death as having finished the race, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...” 2 Timothy 4:7* This not a cry of defeat, but of victory!

That is because to be *“...away from the body”* is to be *“at home with the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 5:8*

Where did he get that? Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *“Today you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:43*

Thus it was Paul’s desire *“...to depart and be with Christ...” Philippians 1:23*

Not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!

“O death where is your victory, O death where is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15:55

I'll see the lights of glory And I'll know He lives!

Right now *“We walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7*

But one day our faith will be made sight. *“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3:2*

And what is He like? *“The city has no need of sun or moon...for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” Revelation 21:23*

Like the light of the sun! And we *“...will see his face...” Revelation 22:4*

And we will know we are forever *“At home with the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 5:8*

He will be visible. We will recognize Him for who He is. And when we do, we’ll be at complete peace. We’ll be home.

It’s not wonder the chorus of this hymn says,

Chorus: Because He lives, I can face tomorrow! Because He lives, All fear is gone.

James reminds us the reality of our finite minds saying, *“...you do not know what tomorrow will bring ...”*
James 4:14

But what we know and can count on is, *“...His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning...”*
Lamentations 3:22–23

And His *“...grace is sufficient for you...”* *2 Corinthians 12:9* no matter what tomorrow brings!

Because I know He holds the future,

“The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?” *Isaiah 14:27*

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together...” *Colossians 1:17–18*

This is not only a cosmic truth. It becomes very personal in Psalm 139, *“In your book were written...the days that were formed for me...”* *Psalm 139:16*

And Jesus reassures us that we are safe and secure in His hand, *“No one will snatch them out of my hand.”*
John 10:27–28

Peter gives us a double-guarantee saying we have *“been born again...to an inheritance...kept in heaven for you who are guarded through faith...”* *1 Peter 1:3–5*

Paul, too, is confident in the future completion of our salvation, *“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion...”* *Philippians 1:6*

This is precisely why Christians have good reason to find comfort in it, because our entire life, not just our salvation is part of God’s plan all the way to the point of seeing Jesus face to face, *“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”* *Romans 8:30*

From predestined before the world began to the moment of glorification when we see Jesus face to face, it is all in God’s hands. He holds the future and He holds it securely!

And life is worth the living, Just because He lives!

“We have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” *1 Peter 1:3*

“He who raised Christ...will also give life to your mortal bodies...” *Romans 8:11*

This isn’t just about life in the hereafter. It’s for life here now, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* *John 10:10*

We’re talking about present-tense life, *“Whoever has the Son has life...”* *1 John 5:12*

And that abundant life is a transformed life, *“If we live, we live to the Lord...”* *Romans 14:8*

“I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” *Galatians 2:20*

Therefore, friends, *“Be steadfast... knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”* *1 Corinthians 15:58*

Even when life feels harder than you can bear. Even when you feel you’re at the end of your rope. Even when you cannot make sense of what is happening in your life. *“For those who love God all things work together for good...”* *Romans 8:28*

God doesn’t waste your suffering. He uses it all for His glory and your good.

This life will not be easy, but it will be redeemed, *“This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory...”* *2 Corinthians 4:16–18*

The world we’re looking at seems no less and no more stable than the world did in Gloria Gaither’s day. The same fears, the same complexities, the same racial tensions, and the same moral revolutions she was looking at are happening today. So on the one hand, it hasn’t gotten worse. But it hasn’t gotten better, has it?

Is there fear in you? Anxiety? Panic? Will you let that melt away? Are you willing to let the resurrection reshape how you see the world and your life and the lives of your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? If God sent His Son who lived and died to buy your pardon and if He rose from the grave will you, like Gloria Gaither, let LIFE conquer death in the regularity of the day?

Every generation has the opportunity to trust the Lord and keep our eyes on Him. No matter what life is throwing at you today, no matter what unknown tomorrow holds, no matter how you feel right now, whether its fear, anxiety, weight, burdened, or otherwise down, there is good reason to remain optimistic, hopeful, and full of joy – because He lives!

Jesus said it Himself, *“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19*