

Higher Ground (Red Hymnal 308)

Source: *Amazing Grace: 366 Hymn Stories for Devotions, Second Edition* Kenneth W. Osbeck Kergel (Publications Grand Rapids MI, 1984), p 89

Johnson Oatman Jr. (Lyrics) (1956-1922)

Charles H. Gabriel. (Music) (1856-1922)

Hymn History

Christianity is a life filled with potential, but because of apathy, very few live in a way that produces evidence of the potential offered. Sadder still is the total exemption of any spiritual growth in many claiming Christianity. The Bible explains that Christian maturity is a process that we advance from one stage to the next. We, however, will not advance if we aren't yielding to the Spirit's inner desire to advance in God's purpose through our lives.

"Higher Ground" has been a favourite to many since 1898 when it was published. The author of the text was Johnson Oatman Jr., a businessman who in his leisure time wrote three thousand gospel songs.

Charles H. Gabriel, the editor of the Rodeheaver Publishing Company composed the music. It was used in the Billy Sunday- Homer Rodeheaver campaigns from 1910-1920.

Hymn Lyrics

1. I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Refrain: Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

2. My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where those abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

3. I want to live above the world, Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground.

4. I want to scale the utmost height And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till heav'n I've found, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Biblical Relevance

Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Philippians 3:12-16 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

"Reflect on some particular area of life that with God's enablement could be lived on a higher level. Use this musical prayer to help."

Lead On, O King Eternal (Red Hymnal 407)

Source: *Amazing Grace: 366 Hymn Stories for Devotions, Second Edition* Kenneth W. Osbeck Kergel (Publications Grand Rapids MI, 1984), p295

Ernest W. Shurtleff (Lyric) (1862-1917) (Henry Smart 1813-1879 Arr. By Jon Drevits, 1928-)

Hymn History

Ernest W. Shurtleff, author of this text, was about to graduate from Andover Seminary in 1887. His classmates at seminary, recognizing the poetic ability of their colleague, shortly before graduation one day approached Shurtleff with this request: “Ernest, why don’t you write our class poem. After all, you have already published two volumes of poetry—What’s the use of having a distinguished author in our class if he can not rise to the occasion and do his class honor of writing a good poem just for them?”

“Let’s make it a hymn that we can all sing,” replied Shurtleff. “We’ve been spending days of preparation here at seminary. Now the day of the march has come and we must go out to follow the leadership of the King of kings, to conquer the world under His banner.”

Although the metaphors and expressions this hymn intended to challenge the graduating class of 1887 at Andover Seminary, the truths of this text can be applied to our lives today. This is not the time for any of us to slacken our efforts in the service of our Lord. The crown awaits the conquest— “Lead on, O God of might!”

Hymn Lyrics

1. Lead on, O King Eternal, The day of march has come;
Henceforth in fields of conquest Thy tents shall be our home.
Through days of preparation Thy grace has made us strong;
And now, O King Eternal, We lift our battle song.

2. Lead on, O King Eternal, Till sin’s fierce war shall cease,
And holiness shall whisper The sweet amen of peace.
For not with swords’ loud clashing, Nor roll of stirring drums;
With deeds of love and mercy The heav’nly kingdom comes.

3. Lead on, O King Eternal, We follow, not with fears,
For gladness breaks like morning Where’er Thy face appears.
Thy cross is lifted o’er us, We journey in its light;
The crown awaits the conquest; Lead on, O God of might.

Biblical Relevance

2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Isaiah 48:17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

1 Corinthians 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Philippians 1:27-30 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me. (Psalm 25:4-10)

“Ask God to lead you to greater spiritual conquests than you have yet known and to enable you to win the victory ‘with deeds of love and mercy.’ Carry these musical truths with you.”

All That Thrills My Soul is Jesus (Red Hymnal 463)

Source: [All That Thrills My Soul | Wordwise Hymns](#)

Thoro Harris (1874-1955)

Hymn History

Thoro Harris published this beautiful gospel song in 1931. Every stanza of this hymn says significant things about our wonderful Saviour, and the emotional strength of the music matches the text well, with the opening note of the refrain sounding like a great exclamation mark—“All that thrills my soul...”

Stanza 1. “Cheer” is a word associated with Christ. He encouraged many to “Be of good cheer,” exhorting hearers to be comforted and take courage (Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Jn. 16:33; Acts 23:11). And it’s the personal qualities of Christ that bring cheer to the heart of Mr. Harris. Jesus is true (Rev. 19:11), true to His promises, and “the [personified] truth” in Himself (Jn. 14:6). He is also pure, and without any taint of sin (I Pet. 2:22). And He is tender and compassionate (Matt. 9:36). No wonder, “to you who believe He is precious” (I Pet. 2:7).

The refrain borrows a phrase from the Song of Solomon to further extol the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon’s betrothed describes the king as “chief among ten thousand” (S.S. 5:10), a poetic way of saying He is the greatest of all.

1) Who can cheer the heart like Jesus, By His presence all divine?
True and tender, pure and precious, O how blest to call Him mine!
*All that thrills my soul is Jesus, He is more than life to me;
And the fairest of ten thousand In my blessed Lord I see.*

Stanza 2. Here are three qualities that are spoken of many times in the New Testament and associated particularly with Christ: **mercy** (Heb. 2:17; Jude 1:21; and II Jn. 1:3, which includes all three qualities); **love** (Rom. 8:35; II Cor. 5:14; Gal. 2:20); **grace** (Jn. 1:17; Rom. 16:24; II Cor. 8:9).

Stanza 3. The author focuses on God’s great salvation, and our “wonderful redemption” in Christ. Mr. Harris alludes to the promise of God in Isaiah 1:18 to describe how God has cleansed him from sin, through Christ: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Stanza 4. The Bible teaches that the Lord will meet the needs of the saints, day by day. “[When] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11). “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). In testing times, as we struggle with our burdens and our limitations, we have the assurance: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Cor. 12:9).

Stanza 5. Thoro Harris envisions the beautiful river flowing out from the throne of God in the heavenly city (Rev. 22:1). There, in glory, the saints will continue to “praise and glorify the King.”

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Rev. 1:4-7; 4:8, 10-11; 5:9-10, 12-14).

5) By the crystal flowing river With the ransomed I will sing,
And forever and forever Praise and glorify the King.
*All that thrills my soul is Jesus, He is more than life to me;
And the fairest of ten thousand In my blessed Lord I see.*

Satisfied (Red Hymnal 446)

Source: *Amazing Grace: 366 Hymn Stories for Devotions, Second Edition* Kenneth W. Osbeck Kergel (Publications Grand Rapids MI, 1984), p185

Clara Tear Williams (Lyric) (1858-1937) Ralph E. Hudson (arrangement) (1834-1901)

Hymn History

The world's lie is that contentment in this world is dependent on the possessions we have in this world. We as Christians should know that this thought process is not based in Truth. Paul while sitting in a prison in Rome was able by the inspiration of the Holy spirit to write this reality in Philippians 4:12, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

In his book *Songs that Lift the Heart*, George Beverly Shea tells of his first meeting with the author of this hymn text, Clara Tear Williams. It occurred while he was walking one day with his father.

"That" said Dad, "was Mrs. Clara Tear Williams. She writes hymns." There was a near reverence in his voice, and though I was only eight years old, I was duly impressed. When dad and I got home that afternoon, I told Mother about meeting Mrs. Williams, the hymn writer. She smiled knowingly and nodded her head. Then she went to the piano bench and found a hymnal that contained one of Clara Tear Williams' compositions. She explained that Mrs. Williams—a Wesleyan Methodist like us—had written the words, but the music had been written by Ralph E. Hudson, an Ohio publisher who also was an evangelistic singer. A few years later, when I was in my teens and began to sing solos, I memorized the hymn that Mother played that day and sang it. It was entitled, "Satisfied."

Hymn Lyrics

1. All my life I had a longing For a drink from some clear spring,
That I hoped would quench the burning Of the thirst I felt within.

Refrain: Hallelujah! I have found Him Whom my soul so long has craved!
Jesus satisfies my longings, Through His blood I now am saved.

2. Feeding on the husks around me, Till my strength was almost gone,
Longed my soul for something better, Only still to hunger on.

3. Poor I was, and sought for riches, Something that would satisfy,
But the dust I gathered round me Only mocked my soul's sad cry.

4. Well of water, ever springing, Bread of life so rich and free,
Untold wealth that never faileth, My Redeemer is to me.

Biblical Relevance

Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalms 81:16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

Psalm 103:5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Philippians 4:11-12 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

"Reflect on this question: 'What is the true source of my daily satisfaction?' Then, sing this musical testimony as you go."