

“Be Still, My Soul”

Most of my generation, especially those of us raised in church, will always love hymns. They will forever have a special, unique place in our heart. Many of us also love other genres of music, like Christian Contemporary, Southern Gospel, Country Gospel, or others forms of Christian music, but traditional hymns will always have a unique spot in our life. Recently my friend Gowdy Cannon had a March Madness hymn sing-off in which people could vote for their favorite hymn, and his carefully-chosen list which matched up some of the best-loved songs of the ages was featured. All were winners; excellent choices that have blessed the saints for decades or even centuries, and all deserved to be on that list.

I'd like to put another song on my list of great hymns. I'm not saying this particular song is the greatest ever. Much of that is certainly subjective, and I prefer to say that there are many wonderful songs that have ministered to the body of Christ, and have been the body's vehicle to give praise and worship to the Lord and that there is probably no way to pick the “best-ever.”

I would, however, like to add “Be Still, My Soul” to the list of all-time greats. The music is stellar; written by Jean Sibelius of Finland. It's actually a classical piece “Finlandia,” which is the national anthem of Finland, and tells the story of that European nation. A portion of the music was then utilized to create the hymn. The lyrics were written much earlier by Kathrina von Schlegel, and this is the only hymn she was ever known to have written.

It was translated into English by Jane Laurie Borthwick in 1855 into the version we commonly sing today. The music has been used for other compositions, such as in Elisabeth Elliot's book *Through Gates of Splendor* about the five martyred missionaries in Ecuador “We rest on Thee, our Shield

and Great Defender,” and more recently by Gloria Gaither in “I Then Shall Live.” The music, of an unsurpassed beauty, lends itself for many poetic compositions.

My favorite arrangement of “Be Still, My Soul” is that of the group 2nd Chapter of Acts. Converted to Christ during the Jesus Movement, they sang some beautiful compositions, such as “O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus,” “The Easter Song (Hear the Bells Ringing”); a song they wrote), and others. I have found their version of “Be Still, My Soul” to be one of my all-time favorite songs.

Unlike some hymns, which are sung in worship to the Lord (think of “How Great Thou Art”), or as testimony songs (“Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine”) “Be Still My Soul” is sung to one’s self as an exhortation, an encouragement, and a reminder of God’s sovereignty and steadfast faithfulness.

Jane Laurie Borthwick’s translation is powerful. I recommend you find yourself a good arrangement of the song; I’d recommend 2nd Chapter of Acts’ version as I mentioned earlier, and listen to this beautiful hymn. Even more, find a copy of the lyrics and meditate on them.

*1. Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly, Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*2. Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.*

*3. Be still, my soul, though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears;
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrows and thy fears.
Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay
From His own fulness all He takes away.*

*4. Be still, my soul; the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

Hymns are nutritious to the soul when we sing them and meditate on their message. The stability, the strength of the believer is found in our steadfast and sovereign God. Our soul can find its rest and peace only in Him. What a blessing to experience this, even in the midst of storms and severe trials! The song "Be Still, My Soul", both in biblically-based lyric and unsurpassed classical music, brings countless Christians assurance and hope. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.