

Blessed Assurance

Words by Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), Music by Phoebe Knapp (1839-1908)

Fanny Crosby was born healthy in 1820, but a doctor incorrectly prescribed a hot poultice to treat her, and it made her go blind when she was six weeks old. Yet Fanny chose to bless God, not blame him:

“It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind . . . for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour.”

Fanny wrote over 8,000 hymns and songs throughout her life and had over 100 million copies of her songs in print! She also wrote over 1,000 secular poems and four books of poetry. She is one of the hymn writers we know best today.

Fanny Crosby was close friends with Phoebe Knapp, who attended the same New York City church as Crosby. Knapp was the daughter of itinerant Methodist speakers Walter C. Palmer and Phoebe Worrall Palmer, whose ministry influenced tens of thousands.

One day in 1873, Crosby visited Knapp in her home as she sat at her piano. Knapp had composed yet another tune, but she hadn't worked out any words for it! Phoebe thought that her friend could help, so she played the tune on her piano two or three times and asked Crosby, “What do you think the tune says?”

Fanny knew. “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,” she replied. Hebrews 10:22 was the song's inspiration: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Fanny Crosby had found her own “blessed assurance” twenty-two years earlier. Though she had been raised in a God-fearing home and memorized entire books of the Bible in her childhood, she truly surrendered to God when she was 31, in 1851. One night after praying the Lord's Prayer, she had wrestled over whether she could truthfully say, “Thy will be done.” Her test came that night when she dreamed that a godly man she greatly respected was on his deathbed. She visited him, and he asked her, “Fanny, can you give me up?” She told him honestly, “No, I cannot.” He questioned her further, and she admitted that she couldn't give him up in her own strength, but she would be willing to try in God's strength. Her friend then asked her to promise him that she would meet him in heaven, and he passed away. When she woke from the dream, she didn't rest inside until she could honestly say, “Thy will be done.”

The song, like many of Crosby's others, gained worldwide popularity. A man told Ira Sankey that British soldiers fighting the Second Boer War in South Africa, around 1899, referred to it. When relieving each other of duty on the front lines, they would pass each other with the greeting “Four-nine-four, boys; four-nine four.” The other soldier would answer, “Six further on, boys; six further on.” Their code referred to numbers in Sankey's book, *Sacred Songs and Solos*. “Four-nine-four” was “God Be With You Till We Meet Again,” and “six further on” was number 500, “Blessed Assurance.”

After Fanny died in 1915 at age 94, her tombstone was inscribed with Jesus' words from Mark 14:8: “She hath done what she could.” Forty years later, in 1955, the city of Bridgeport, Conn., where she was buried, replaced her tombstone with one inscribed with the words of her beloved “Blessed Assurance.”

Blessed Assurance

1

D D G/D D / A/E E7

1. Bless - ed as - sur - ance, Je - sus is mine! O what a fore - taste of glo - ry di -
 2. Per - fect sub - mis - sion, per - fect de - light! Vi - sions of rap - ture now burst on my
 3. Per - fect sub - mis - sion - all is at rest, I in my Sav - ior am hap - py and

4 A D D G/D D

vine! Heir of sal - va - tion, pur - chase of God, Born of His
 sight; An - gels de - scend - ing, bring from a - bove Ech - oes of
 blest; Watch ing and wait - ing, look - ing a - bove, Filled with His

7 G Em/G D/A A7 D / G D

Spir - it, washed in His blood. This is my sto - ry, this is my song, Prais - ing my
 mer - cy, whis - pers of love. good - ness, lost in His love.

11 G D/F# A/E E A A7 D G/D

Sav - ior all the day long; This is my sto - ry, this is my

14 D G D/A A7 D

song, Prais - ing my Sav - ior all the day long.