

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

1 SAMUEL 7:12

Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

DESCRIPTION

This is a prayer for the wayward and wandering Christian to retune their lives to Christ.

VERSES

Robert Robinson wrote this hymn in the 18th century to describe as a reflection of his own salvation. Robinson had lost his father at a young age, and sought what this world had to offer through gangs, drinking, etc. He was broken over hearing the Word of God as proclaimed by the revivalist preacher, George Whitfield, which turned Robinson toward the Lord both personally and in ministerial service (which this hymn would be produced years later). Each verse describes a different facet of this incredible grace that Robinson, and all Christians, encounter when confronted by the gospel of Christ.

The first verse reflects the response to coming in contact with the abundance of mercy: a praise with which he has never worshiped before (hence the terms – "tune my heart" and "teach me" – that allude to a request to be led into such worship). The second verse opens with a term, "Ebenezer" making a clear reference to 2 Samuel 7:12. An Ebenezer is a memorial that is erected to mark a moment for remembrance (particularly in regard to what God has done). That moment that Robinson is marking, or raising his Ebenezer, is the work of Christ who has called, sought, and rescued him through His blood. Being confronted with this overwhelming grace, and memorializing the occasion to easily be remembered, Robinson still felt the wickedness of his heart, and how it wants nothing more than to depart from God. Thus, Robinson surrenders himself to the Lord and petitions for His grace to keep him close to, and sealed with, Him.

The life of the author of this hymn has significantly left its imprint on the song, but his experience is not isolated to him. Each of us desires to respond to the mercy shown to us. Christ's invasion into our lives as we bowed for the first time is undoubtedly a marked moment. And more so, we can all sympathize with the understanding of our wicked hearts who seek to wander from the God we love. May this song serve as a call to worship as we ought, a remembrance of what He has done, and a prayer to walk closer to Him today than yesterday by the power of the Holy Spirit.