

My Loved Ones:

God says in 1 Corinthians 16:13 - Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

Isaac Watts, known as “The Father of English Hymnody” grew up in a Dissenter home. Dissenters were those who had split from the official Church of England (sometimes called *Anglican*; in the United States we call them *Episcopalian*). These churches were free or independent churches that did not bow to the rules of the nation of England in worship. These Dissenters suffered persecution from the church of England and many imprisoned for their beliefs and convictions. Watts’ father was a leader in a Dissenting Congregational church, and was in prison when Isaac was born because of his “non-conformist” beliefs. A great advantage to being a Dissenter or Non-Conformist was that it was engrained in you to be fearless and resolute in your proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The hymn today reflects those convictions. Watts wrote this hymn based on the text mentioned above.

Loved ones, let’s face it: we’re in difficulties, and only the strong spiritually and mentally are going to be able to make it through these dark days. Some Christians may say “I don’t feel called to be that controversial or that “militant” about my faith. Jim Elliot, great missionary to Ecuador, said, “we don’t need a call; we need a kick in the pants.” May these words be used by the Lord to “kick us in the pants” to be toughened up in these days to meet the demands the Lord has for us.

Am I a soldier of the cross, / A follow’r of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause, / Or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies / On flow’ry beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize, / And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face? / Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace, / To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign; / Increase my courage, Lord;  
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain, / Supported by Thy Word.

Thy saints in all this glorious war / Shall conquer, though they die;  
They see the triumph from afar, / By faith’s discerning eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise, / And all Thy armies shine  
In robes of vict’ry through the skies, / The glory shall be Thine.

I’m not ashamed to own my Lord, / Or to defend His cause;  
Maintain the honor of His Word, The glory of His cross.

We love you and are praying for you today.