

Paul Gerhardt

The Singer of Comfort, Hope, and Peace in Christ

His Life and Summaries of Seventeen of His Hymns



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When I was a student in Germany in 1984, I spent many weekends traveling from one city to the next. Each city had at least one beautiful old church in the center of town. As I saw these beautiful structures, I began to wonder what exerted the most influence in the faith of the lives of those Christians who had worshiped in these places. That question was answered when I ministered to people in German in my first congregation. I had a little agenda that had psalms, Scripture readings and hymn verses, which I used for hospital visits. I noticed that the people dearly loved the hymn verses, which were almost all from Paul Gerhardt. Often the people recited the verses from memory with me. I quickly noticed that while we Americans often like a hymn because of its tune, these German people liked hymns because of their text. The words of those hymns, which gave them comfort and peace, were engraved in their hearts.

Later I learned another example of how precious these hymns were to the German people. My father-in-law was a twin. His parents named his older brother Paul, and his name was Gerhardt.

I came to appreciate the hymns of Paul Gerhardt, when I found a series of books by Jörg Erb with biographies of hymn writers. Each book covered the hymns of a period of the Lutheran Church, except for one volume which covered only Paul Gerhardt's life and his hymns.¹ This book was the beginning of my appreciation for the hymns and life of Paul Gerhardt.

Many people ask me what it is that about his hymns which has attracted me and so many other Christians. The answer to that question can be answered by the two memorials to Gerhardt at his last church in Lübben.



Just in front of the entrance to the church is a statue by Friedrich Pfannschmidt, which was erected for the 300th anniversary of Gerhardt's birth in 1907. It portrays Gerhardt's right hand pointing to a broken canon behind him. His left hand shows us an open copy of his hymnal. This imagery shows that the war eventually passed, but the power of his hymns remained through the centuries. What I find especially interesting about this memorial is that his preaching robe is open to reveal the clothing of the common man. Paul Gerhardt could relate to every one of us.

His hymns relate to our joys. In "Die güldne Sonne" (Evening and Morning) and "Geh aus mein Herz" ("Go Forth My Heart") he sings of the joys of creation. In "Wie schön ist doch Herr Jesu Christ" ("O Jesus Christ") he sings of the joys of marriage. Paul Gerhardt enjoyed life. He loved the blessings of this life. While his hymns remind us that nothing in this world last, they also encourage us to enjoy the ways that God has blessed us in this world.

His hymns also know our sins and weaknesses. Some good examples are his passion hymns or his hymn of repentance, which was written at the end of the Thirty Years' War. ("Herr, der du vormals hast dein Land") In "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," he writes

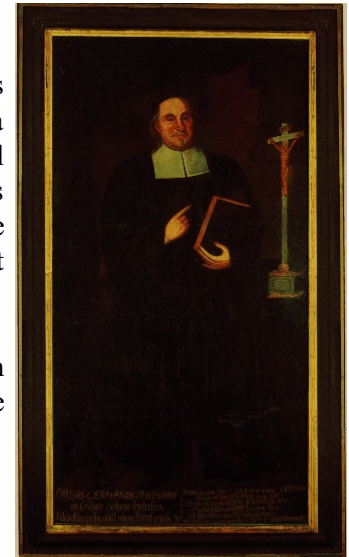
My burden is Thy Passion,
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression
Which brought this woe on Thee,
I cast me down before Thee.
Wrath were my rightful lot;
have mercy, I implore Thee;
Redeemer spurn me not. (vs 4)

¹*Paul Gerhardt und seine Lieder, Jörg Erb*

His hymns also understand our sorrows, griefs, and suffering. He encourages us in times of trouble in many verses such as this one from “O Lord How Shall I Greet Thee?” (Wie soll ich dich empfangen?)

Rejoice then ye sad hearted,
Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o’er joys departed
And tremble at your doom.
Despair not, He is near you,
Yea, standing at the door,
who best can help and cheer you
And bids you weep no more. (vs 6)

When you enter the church in Lübben, you notice a life-size portrait of Gerhardt. It is hanging on the left side of the chancel. It was painted by an unknown artist, possibly a member of the congregation, shortly after Gerhardt’s death. He is wearing the traditional robes of a pastor at that time, but what especially strikes you is the pointer finger on his right hand. It points over his heart, across a Bible, to a crucifix of Jesus Christ. The artist who painted that picture knew how the hymns of Paul Gerhardt direct us to Christ crucified for us. They give us comfort in Christ.



His hymns point us to Christ. They remind us of the new relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ, such as this one from “Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?” (Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen?)

Lord, my Shepherd take me to Thee.
Thou art mine; I was Thine, Even e’er I knew Thee.
I am Thine, for Thou hast bought me;
Lost I stood, but Thy blood free salvation bought me. (vs 12)

That relationship is grounded in God’s forgiving love through Jesus Christ. It gives us peace and hope in every situation in life. Every Paul Gerhardt hymn ends in heaven. The last verse always reminds us of the joy that we will have when with the Lord forever in all of His glory. That is shown especially in the final verse of “If God Himself Be for Me.” (Ist Gott für mich)

My heart with joy is springing And can no more be sad,
‘This full of mirth and singing, Sees naught but sunshine glad.
The Sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King;
The heaven I shall inherit Makes me rejoice and sing. (vs 15)

These hymns give us comfort and peace in every situation in life because they point us to the great love and mercy of our God through Jesus Christ our Savior. They have comforted millions of Christians these last 400 years. In this Paul Gerhardt anniversary year, there has been a resurgence of interest from his hymns. I pray that this little booklet will introduce you to these hymns, that they may be a source of strength in our Lord Jesus Christ for you also.

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Milwaukee, WI
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“It is good to read Paul Gerhardt’s hymns and to learn them by heart, which I am now doing.” (Dietrich Bonhoefer in a letter to his parents from Tegel prison, April 1943) “There are times when I am just content to live the life of faith without worrying about life’s problems. At those times I simply take pleasure in the daily Scripture readings... and I’m always glad to go back to Paul Gerhardt’s beautiful hymns and find joy in this treasure.” (in a letter to his friend Eberhard Bethge, July 21, 1944 from Tegel.)

Paul Gerhardt

(1607-1676)

Christianity's Greatest Hymnwriter

Paul Gerhardt was born on March 12, 1607 in Gräfenhainichen, Germany, a village between Halle and Wittenberg. His father, Christian Gerhardt, was mayor of the village. When Paul was only 12, his father died, and two years later his mother Dorothea was called by our Savior. Paul, his brother Christian, and their two sisters were left without their parents at a young age, but the parents' inn continued to supply enough money for the raising and education of the children. From 1622 to 1627 Gerhardt attended school at Grimma. From 1628 until 1642 he studied theology at the University of Wittenberg.

During much of his youth Germany was ravaged by the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). After the Swedish king was killed, both armies began to loot the German towns. In 1637 the Swedes came to Gräfenhainichen und demanded 3,000 Gulden war tax. The town was able to gather the amount, but the army burned the town anyway. Every house, barn, even the church and castle, were burned to the ground. In the same year Gerhardt's brother Christian died of the plague at 31 years old.

In 1642 Gerhardt went to Berlin where he became family tutor in the home of Andreas Berthold, an attorney. In the Christian atmosphere of this home his gift of song began to develop and bear fruit. Many of his hymns were published by Johann Crüger in 1648.

In 1651 at the age of 44 he received his first pastorate in the village of Mittenwalde. Mittenwalde was still reeling from the effects of the 30 Year's War. Both armies had been through the village time and time again, burning and plundering what little was left. Few houses remained, and the fields had grown wild. The bloodiness of the war was now over, but hunger had taken its place. The young pastor felt the same poverty as the rest of the people in the village.

On February 11, 1655 at the age of 48, Gerhardt married Anna Maria Berthold, who was a young 32. She was the daughter of Andreas Berthold, where Gerhardt had lived in Berlin. Very quickly their hearts were broken when their first child, Anna Maria died before she was a year old.

In 1657 Gerhardt accepted a call as the third assistant pastor of the Church of St. Nicholas in Berlin. He continued his hymn-writing, and became recognized as the most popular preacher in the city. At this time there was bitter strife between the Lutheran and the Reformed clergy in Berlin. Because Gerhardt wasn't as harsh as others in condemning the opposition, he gained the respect and esteem of many of the leaders of the Reformed group. But in 1662 the elector, Friedrich Wilhelm the Great, a Calvinist, issued an edict which forbade Lutheran and Reformed ministers to attack each others doctrine and confession. Gerhardt believed that signing the document would be a compromise of his faith. When he and other ministers refused to sign, they were deposed from office by the government. Just before this unfortunate occurrence he had lost 3 of his 5 children; now a son died; and his wife was seriously ill.

Because of the pleadings of the people of Berlin, the town council, and even the elector's wife, Gerhardt was offered reinstatement in 1667. But he refused because it was only under the condition that he would preach according to the edict. For 3 years he was without a position and had to rely on the generosity of members of his former congregation. During this period his wife died in 1668, leaving him only a 6 year old son. In May of 1669 he was called to the office of archdeacon of Lübben. Here he worked for 7 years with much success until his death in 1676. He died with this prayer on his lips,

Kann uns doch kein Tod nicht töten, Sondern reist unsern Geist Aus viel tausend Nöten;
Scheuzst das Tor der bitteren Leiden Und macht Bahn, Da man kann Gehn zur Himmelsfreuden.

(Warum sollt ich mich den grämen, vs. 8)

{Our death can't kill us, but it takes our spirit out of thousands of troubles. It closes the door of bitter suffering and opens the way through which we enter heaven's joys.}

("Why should cross and Trial Grieve Me, TLH 523 vs 5")

Paul Gerhardt was an excellent pastor and the best hymn writer the Church has ever known. He wrote a total of 133 hymns. Many of the outward circumstances of his life were gloomy, but his hymns are full of cheerful trust. They show a great faith in a God, who always gives His grace to those who are His through faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Paul Gerhardt Hymns in the Lutheran Hymnal: 25, 58, 77, 81, 90, 108, 122, 142, 171, 172, 192, 228, 349, 520, 523, 528, 535, 554, 569, 581, 586.

Paul Gerhardt Hymns in the Missouri Synod German Hymnal: 20, 39, 40, 44, 46, 54, 56, 73, 84, 89, 91, 97, 113, 130, 141, 150, 187, 200, 248, 256, 274, 290, 291, 304, 319, 338, 339, 340, 347, 351, 355, 366, 370, 375, 379, 401, 409, 419, 432, 450, 451, 482.

In 1648 Johann Crüger, the cantor of St. Nicholas Church published a hymnal entitled, *Praxis Pietatis Melica*, with the subtitle "*The Practice of Christian Piety (Gottseligkeit) in Christian and Comforting Hymns by Dr. Martin Luther along with his true followers and confessors of the pure Evangelical Teaching*." Many of Gerhardt's hymns were first published in this hymnal. This became the most printed hymnal in history, and probably began to shape the Lutheran Church into the singing church. In 1666 Johann Ebeling, Crüger's successor, printed the first complete collection of Gerhardt's hymns.

Paul Gerhardt's hymns were popular from their inception, but in the late 1700's Rationalism couldn't stand his complete dependence on God. The texts of his hymns were either butchered or completely left out of the hymnals of this era. However, the Lutheran confessional revival of the 19th century, rediscovered Gerhardt's beautiful hymns.

His hymns have exerted much influence on English hymnody. The singing of German hymns made such an impression on John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism, that he translated 37 of them into English, including 3 of Gerhardt's. Gerhardt's influence on English hymnody continued into the nineteenth century when many of his hymns were translated, especially by John Kelly and Catherine Winkworth. Ninety of his hymns have been translated into English by 50 people.

His hymns greatly influenced the faith and piety of the early Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. They were dearly loved. Many people were able to recite all the verses of many of his hymns. It's interesting that almost every hymn that CFW Walther and George Stoeckhardt quote in their sermons is a hymn by Paul Gerhardt. The Missouri Synod was influenced as much by the Gospel in the hymns of Paul Gerhardt as in the theology of Martin Luther. Today his hymns remain a source of joy and comfort in Christ for all who take them to heart.



This is the oldest painting of Paul Gerhardt. It hangs in his last church in Lübben, Germany. He is pointing us to Christ the Crucified, because that is exactly what his hymns do. They direct us to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

HYMN OF TRUST

"Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund" (German 339) *O Lord, I Sing with Lips and Heart" (TLH 569 & 535, LW 424)*

There are three parts to this hymn of trust. Verses 1-6 answer the question, "Who am I," The answer is "a poor person, who is totally dependant on God". As proof he lists many of God's gifts to us without which it would be impossible to exist. A good summary of this section is verse 2.

The middle section answers the question, "Who is God?" The answer is the creator and giver of all good gifts. The hymnwriter praises and thanks God for all of His goodness in this section. Everything comes from God; He watches over us and takes care of us; He disciplines us and forgives our sins; and He comforts the afflicted. The twelfth verse (TLH 569 vs 9) summarizes this section.

The third section asks the question, "My heart, why are you so downcast?" Gerhardt knew the troubles we can have and how grieved we can be, so he says, Sing, leap for joy, and be cheerful. God is your shield, your help, and your salvation. Hasn't He led you and been with you since your youth? Hasn't He helped you in every time of need? Then why are you so downcast? "On Thy Creator Cast Thy care, He makes thy burden light".

This beautiful hymn of trust was taken out of the hymnals during the period of the Enlightenment. The spirit of the age couldn't bear such dependence on God. The age lauded human reasoning and what man could achieve. It sought independence from God and His revelation in the Bible. In an age, which is so similar to the Enlightenment, it is a great gift of God to have this hymn in our hymnals, which shows how dependant we are on God and His goodness, and how we can confidently trust Him throughout our life.

The Lutheran Hymnal divides it into two hymns, and the verses are mixed up. Verses 1-8 are TLH 569, 1-8; verses 9-11 are TLH 535, 5-7; verse 12 is TLH 569, 9; verses 13-16 are TLH 535, 1-4; and verses 17 & 18 are TLH 535, 8&9.

1. O Lord, I sing with lips and heart,
Joy of my soul to Thee;
To earth Thy knowledge I impart
As it is known to me.

2. Thou art the Fount of grace, I know,
And Spring so full and free
Whence saving health and goodness flow
Each day so bounteously.

3. For what have all that live and move
Through this wide world below
That does no from Thy bounteous love,
O heav'nly Father, flow?

4. Who built the lofty firmament?
Who spread th' expanse of blue?
By whom are to our pastures sent
Refreshing rain and dew?

5. Who warmeth us in cold and rain?
Who shields us from the wind?
Who orders it that fruit and grain
We in their season find?

1. Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund,
Herr, meines Herzen Lust;
ich sing und mach auf Erden kund,
was mir von dir bewußt.

2. Ich weiß, daß du der Brunn der Gnad
und ewge Quelle bist,
daraus uns allen früh und spat
viel Heil und Gutes fließt.

3. Was sind wir doch? Was haben wir
auf dieser ganzen Erd,
daß uns, o Vater, nicht von dir
allein gegeben werd?

4. Wer hat das schöne Himmelszelt
hoch über uns gesetzt?
Wer ist es, der uns unser Feld
mit Tau und Regen netzt?

5. Wer wärmeth uns in Kält und Frost?
Wer schützt uns vor dem Wind?
Wer macht es, daß man Öl und Most
zu seinen Zeiten findt?

6. Who is it life and health bestows?
Who keeps us with His hand
In golden peace, wards off war's woes
From our dear native land?

7. O Lord, of this and all our store
Thou art the Author blest;
Thou keepest watch before our door
While we securely rest.

8. Thou feedest us from year to year
And constant dost abide;
With ready help in time of fear
Thou standest at our side.

9. He ever will with patience chide,
His rod falls gently down,
And all thy sins He casts aside
And in the sea doth drown.

10. When silent woe thy bosom rends,
His pity sees thy grief,
Supplies what to His glory tend
And to thine own relief.

11. He knows how oft a Christian weeps
And why his tears now fall;
And in the book His mercy keeps
These things are noted all.

12. Our deepest need dost Thou supply
And all that lasts for aye;
Thou leadest to our home on high
When hence we pass away.

13. Rejoice my heart, be glad and sing,
A cheerful trust maintain;
For God, the Source of ev'rything,
Thy portion shall remain.

14. He is thy Treasure, He thy Joy,
Thy Life and Light and Lord,
Thy Counselor when doubts annoy,
Thy shield and great reward.

15. Why spend the day in blank despair,
In restless thought the night?
On thy Creator cast thy care;
He makes thy burdens light.

16. Did not His love and truth and pow'r
Watch o'er thy childhood day?
Has He not oft in threat'ning hour
Turned dreaded ills away.

17. His wisdom never plans in vain,
Ne'er falters or mistakes;
All that His counsels did ordain
A happy ending makes.

18. Upon thy lips, then, lay thy hand
And trust His guiding love;
Then like a rock thy peace shall stand
Here and in heaven above.

6. Wer gibt uns Leben und Geblüt?
Wer hält mir seiner Hand
den güldnen, werten, irden Fried
in unserm Vaterland?

7. Ach Herr, mein Gott, das kommt von dir,
du, du mußt alles tun
du hältst die Wach an unsrer Tür
und läßt uns sicher ruhn.

8. Du nährst uns von Jahr zu Jahr,
bleibst immer fromm und treu
und stehst uns, wenn wir in Gefahr
geraten, treulich bei.

9. Du strafst uns Sünder mit Geduld
und schlägst nicht allzusehr,
ja endlich nimmst du unsre Schuld
und wirfst sie in das Meer.

10. Wenn unser Herze seufz und schreit,
wirst du gar leicht erweicht
und gibst uns, was uns hoch erfreut
und dir zur Er gereicht.

11. Du zählst, wie oft ein Christe wein
und was sein Kummer sei;
kein Zähr- und Tränlein ist so klein,
du hebst und legst es bei.

12. Du füllst des Lebens Mangel aus
mit dem, was ewig steht,
und führst uns in des Himmels Haus,
wenn und die Erd entgeht.

13. Wohlauf, mein Herze, sing und spring
und habe guten Mut!
Dein Gott, der Ursprung aller Ding,
ist selbst und bleibt dein Gut.

14. Er ist dein Schatz, dein Erb und Teil,
dein Glanz und Freudenlicht,
dein Schirm und Schild, dein Hilf und Heil,
schafft Rat und läßt dich nicht.

15. Was kränkst du dich in deinem Sinn
und grämst dich Tag und Nacht?
Nimm deine Sorg und wirf sie hin
auf den, der dich gemacht.

16. Hat er dich nicht von Jugend auf
Versorget und ernährt?
Wie manches schweren Unglücks Lauf
hat er zurückgekehrt!

17. Er hat noch niemals was versehn
in seinem Regiment,
nein, was er tut und läßt geschehn,
das nimmt ein gutes End.

18. Ei nun, so laß ihn ferner tun
und red ihm nicht darein,
so wirst du hier in Frieden ruhn
und ewig fröhlich sein.

HYMN OF TRUST

Ist Gott für mich so trete (366) *If God Himself be for Me (TLH 528, LW 407)*

On February 26, 1561 Pastor Johannes Berkow of the St. Mary's Church in Berlin performed a baptism in the morning and a funeral in the afternoon. On the way home from the funeral, he was talking with pastors Johann Rösener Martin Lubasch. Suddenly he collapsed and with the cry, "Help me, God!" he gave up his spirit. On Laetare Sunday he was buried from St. Mary's by Pastor Vesper, who preached on Romans 8:31-38. Paul Gerhardt wrote this hymn from the impression, which that sermon left on him.

The hymn follows the biblical text from Romans 8. The first two verses are built around Romans 8:31 "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" inspires verses 3 and 4. The question, "Who shall condemn us?" in Romans 8:34 is taken up in verse 6. Verse 7 talks of our adoption as Christians from Romans 8:15, "You received the spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, *Abba*, Father." The ninth verse is based on Romans 8:26, "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:28 "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him..." is expressed in verse 9. Verses 13 and 14 interpret Romans 8:35-38 in a wonderful way, "For I am convinced that [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This hymn is a great summary of the Christian life. There are times when we are so full of joy and comfort in our salvation through Christ. But the devil uses many things to try to rob us of our comfort and joy. (Vss. 1,8,11,13,14) Our Christian life is in many ways a roller coaster ride of times of joy and times when that joy is threatened. But in both the good and bad times, the Christian always has confidence in our God who forgives us, delivers us from all evil, and who promises us everlasting life in His glory in Heaven. Therefore in the joyful times and the troubling times we can sing,

*My heart for joy is springing and can no more be sad,
'Tis full of mirth and singing, sees naught but sunshine glad.
The Sun that cheers my spirit is Jesus Christ, my King;
The heaven I shall inherit makes me rejoice and sing. (verse 15)*

1. If God Himself be for me,
I may a host defy;
For when I pray, before me
My foes confounded fly.
If Christ my Head and Master,
Befriend me from above,
What foe or what disaster
Can drive me from His love.

2. This I believe, yea rather,
Of this I make my boast,
That God is my dear Father,
The Friend who loves me most,
And that, whate'er betide me,
My Savior is at hand
Through stormy seas to guide me
And bring me safe to land.

1. Ist Gott für mich so trete
gleich alles wider mich;
so oft ich ruf und bete,
weicht alles hinter sich.
Hab ich das Haupt zum Freunde
und bin geliebt bei Gott,
was kann mir tun der Feinde
und Widersacher Rott?

2. Nun weiß und glaub' ich feste,
ich rühm's auch ohne Scheu,
daß Gott der Höchst' und Beste,
mein Freund und Vater sei,
und daß in allen Fällen
er mir zur Rechten steh'
und dämpfe Sturm und Wellen
und was mir bringet Weh.

3. I build on this foundation,
that Jesus and His blood
Alone are my salvation,
The true eternal good.
Without Him all that pleases
Is valueless on earth.
The gifts I owe to Jesus
Alone my love are worth.

4. My Jesus is my Splendor,
My Sun, my Light, alone;
Were He not my Defender
Before God's awe-full throne,
I never should find favor
And mercy in His sight,
But be destroyed forever
As darkness by the light.

5. He canceled my offenses,
Delivered me from death;
He is the Lord who cleanses
My soul from sin through faith.
In Him I can be cheerful,
bold, and undaunted aye;
In Him I am not fearful
Of God's great judgement Day.

6. Naught, Naught, can now condemn me
Nor set my hope aside;
Now hell no more can claim me.
Its fury I deride.
no sentence e'er reproves me,
No ill destroys me peace;
For Christ, my Savior, loves me
And shields me with His grace.

7. His Spirit in me dwelleth,
And o'er my mind He reigns.
All sorrow He dispelleth
And soothes away all pains.
He crowns His work with blessing
And helpeth me to cry,
"My father!" without ceasing,
To Him who dwells on high.

8. And when my soul is lying
Weak, trembling, and opprest,
He pleads with groans and sighing
That cannot be expressed;
But God's quick eye discerns them,
Although they give no sound,
And into language turns them
E'en in the heart's deep ground.

3. Der Grund, da ich mich gründe,
ist Christus und sein Blut;
das machet, daß ich finde
das ewge, wahre Gut.
An mir und meinem Leben
ist nicht auf dieser Erd;
was Christus mir gegeben,
das ist der Liebe wert.

4. Mein Jesus ist mein' Ehre,
mein Glanz und helles Licht.
Wenn der nicht in mir wäre,
so dürft' und könnt ich nicht
vor Gottes Augen stehen
und vor dem strengen Sitz;
ich müßte stracks vergehen
wie Wachs in Feuerhitz'.

5. Der, der hat ausgelöschet,
was mit such führt den Tod;
der ist, der mich rein wäschet,
macht schneeweiß, was ist rot.
In ihm kann ich mich freuen,
hab einen Heldenmut,
darf kein Gerichte scheuen,
wie sonst ein Sünder tut.

6. Nichts, nichts kann mich verdammen,
nichts nimmt mir meinen Mut:
der Höll und ihre Flammen
löscht meines Heilands Blut.
Kein Urteil mich erschreckt,
kein Unheil mich betrübt,
weil mich mit Flügeln decket
mein Heiland, der mich liebt.

7. Sein Geist wohnt mir im Herzen,
regiert mir meinen Sinn,
vertreibt Sorg und Schmerzen,
nimmt allen Kummer hin;
gibt Segen und Gedeihen
dem, was er in mir schafft,
hilft mir das Abba schreien
aus aller meiner Kraft.

8. Und wenn an meinem Orte
sich Furcht und Schrecken findt,
so seufzt und spricht er Worte,
die unausprechlich sind
mir zwar und meinem Munde,
Gott aber wohl bewußt,
der an des Herzen Grunde
ersiehet seine Lust.

9. To mine His Spirit speaketh
Sweet words of holy cheer,
How God to him that seeketh
For rest is always near
And how He hath erected
A city fair and new,
Where all that faith expected
We evermore shall view.

10. In yonder home doth flourish
My heritage and lot;
Though here I die and perish,
My heaven shall fail me not.
Though care my life oft saddens
And causeth tears to flow,
The light of Jesus gladdens
And sweetens every woe.

11. Who clings with resolution
To Him whom Satan hates
Must look for persecution;
For him the burden waits
Of mockery, shame and losses,
Heaped on his blameless head;
a thousand plagues and crosses
Will be his daily bread.

12. From me this is not hidden,
Yet, I am not afraid;
I leave my cares, as bidden,
To whom my vows were paid.
Though life and limb it cost me
and everything I own,
Unshaken shall I trust Thee
And cleave to Thee alone.

13. Though earth be rent asunder,
Thou'rt mine eternally;
Not fire nor sword nor thunder
Shall sever me from Thee;
Not hunger, thirst, nor danger,
Not pain nor poverty
Nor mighty princes' anger
Shall ever hinder me.

14. No angel and no gladness,
No throne, no pomp, no show,
No love, no hate, no sadness,
No pain, no depth of woe,
No scheme of man's contrivance,
However small or great,
shall draw me from Thy guidance
Nor from Thee separate.

15. My heart for joy is springing
And can no more be sad,
'Tis full of mirth and singing,
Sees naught but sunshine glad.
The Sun that cheers my spirit
Is Jesus Christ, my King;
The Heaven I shall inherit
Makes me rejoice and sing.

9. Sein Geist spricht meinem Geiste
manch süßes Trostwort zu:
wie Gott dem Hilfe leiste,
der bei ihm suchet Ruh,
und wie er hab erbauet
ein edle neue Stadt,
da Aug und Herze schauet,
was es geglaubet hat.

10. Da ist mein Teil und Erbe
mir prächtig zugericht';
wenn ich gleich fall und sterbe,
fällt doch mein Himmel nicht.
Muß ich auch gleich hier feuchten
mit Tränen meine Zeit,
mein Jesus und sein Leuchten
durchsüßet alles Leid.

11. Wer sich mit dem verbindet,
den Satan fleucht und haßt,
der wird verfolgt und findet
ein hohe, schwere Last
zu leiden und zu tragen,
gerät in Hohn und Spott;
das Kreuz und alle Plagen
die sind sein täglich Brot.

12. Das ist mir nicht verborgen,
doch bin ich unverzagt.
Gott will ich lassen sorgen,
dem ich mich zugesagt;
es koste Leib und Leben
und alles, was ich hab,
an dir will ich fest kleben
und nimmer lassen ab.

13. Die Welt mag zerbrechen,
du stehst mir ewiglich;
kein Brennen, Hauen, Stechen
soll trennen mich und dich;
kein Hunger und kein Dürsten,
kein Armut, keine Pein,
kein Zorn der großen Fürsten
soll mir ein Hindrung sein.

14. Kein Engel, keine Freuden,
kein Thron, kein Herrlichkeit,
kein Lieben und kein Leiden,
kein angst und Fährlichkeit,
was man nur kann erdenken,
es sei klein oder groß:
der keines soll mich lenken
aus deinem Arm und Schoß.

15. Mein Herze geht in Sprüngen
und kann nicht traurig sein,
ist voller Freud und Singen,
sieht lauter Sonnenschein.
Die Sonne, die mir lachtet,
ist mein Herr Jesus Christ;
das, was mich singen machet,
ist, was im Himmel ist.

HYMN OF TRUST AND COMFORT

Befiehl du deine Wege (German 355) *Commit Whatever Grieves Thee (TLH 520, LW 427)*

Paul Gerhardt's ministry in Mittenwalde was in some ways very joyful. It was his first pastorate, and during his ministry he was married to Maria Berthold in 1655. But that period of his life also brought troubles. His fellow pastor in Mittenwalde hardened his heart more and more against Gerhardt, and the Gerhardt's first child, Anna Maria, died before she was a year old. As tenderhearted as he was, these two dilemmas distressed him greatly.

One Sunday he preached on Psalm 37:5, "Befiehl dem Herrn deine Wege und hoffe auf ihn. Er wird's wohl machen." {Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall make everything well.} The sermon was written from a troubled heart that sought new trust in God. His own words moved Gerhardt so much that the same evening he wrote the sermon again in poetry. The next morning his wife saw the poem lying on the table. The words were so reassuring to her that after she read it, she had to read it a second time. ²

Since that evening this hymn has given hope and comfort to millions of Christians around the world. The hymn was soon published in many German and Scandinavian hymnals. It was sung when the cornerstone was laid of the first Lutheran Church in Philadelphia on May 2, 1743 and when Pastor Muhlenberg, the first Lutheran pastor in America, held the opening service.

In German the hymn forms an acrostic of Psalm 37:5. Each word of the Psalm is the initial word in each verse of the hymn.

An analysis of the hymns gives the following outline:

1. The Invitation: "Commit Your way unto the Lord" (Vss. 1-5)
2. The Exhortation: "Trust also in Him" (vss. 6-8)
3. The Assurance: "He will bring it to pass" (vss. 9-11)
4. The Prayer for Endurance (Verse 12)

Because of the length of the hymn, it is difficult to sing all 12 verses in church. The best place for the hymn, however, is not in our hymnals, but in our hearts. Its words in our hearts will give comfort in any trial, and teach us always to give our cares to the Lord and trust in Him who will lead our lives from all distress and in the end give us eternal joy.

1. Commit whatever grieves thee
Into the gracious hands
Of Him who never leaves thee,
Who heaven and earth commands.
Who points the clouds their courses,
Whom winds and waves obey,
He will direct thy footsteps
And find for thee a way.

2. On Him place thy reliance
If thou wouldst be secure;
His work thou must consider
If thine is to endure.
By anxious sighs and grieving
And self-tormenting care
God is not moved to giving;
All must be gained by prayer.

2. **Befiehl** du deine Wege
und was dein Herze kränkt
der allertreusten Pflege
des, der den Himmel lenkt.
Der Wolken, Luf und Winden
gibt Wege, Lauf und Bahn,
der wird auch Wege finden,
da dein Fuß gehen kann.

2. **Dem Herren** mußst du trauen,
wenn dir's soll wohlergehn,
auf sein Werk mußst du schauen,
wenn dein Werk soll bestehn.
Mit Sorgen und mit Grämen
und mit selbsteigner Pein
läßt Gott sich gar nichts nehmen,
es muß erbeten sein.

²Paul Gerhardt, *der Psalmist der Christenheit*, Kurt Scherer, pp. 29ff.

3. Thy truth and grace, O Father,
Most surely see and know
Both what is good and evil
For mortal man below.
According to Thy counsel
Thou wilt Thy work pursue;
And what Thy wisdom chooseth
Thy might will always do.

4. Thy hand is never shortened,
All things must serve Thy might;
Thine every act is blessing,
Thy path is purest light.
Thy work no man can hinder,
Thy purpose none can stay,
Since Thou to bless Thy children
Wilt always find a way.

5. Though all the powers of evil
The will of God oppose,
His purpose will not falter,
His pleasure onward goes.
Whate'er God's will resolveth,
Whatever He intends.
Will always be accomplished
True to His aims and ends.

6. Then hope, my feeble spirit,
And be thou undismayed;
God helps in every trial
And makes thee unafraid.
Await His time with patience,
Then shall thine eyes behold
The sun of joy and gladness
His brightest beams unfold.

7. Arise, my soul, and banish
Thy anguish and thy care.
Away with thoughts that sadden
And heart and mind ensnare!
Thou art not lord and master
Of thine own destiny;
Enthroned in highest heaven,
God rules in equity.

8. Leave all to His direction;
In wisdom He doth reign,
And in a way most wondrous
His course He will maintain.
Soon He, His promise keeping,
With wonder-working skill,
Shall put away the sorrows
That now thy spirit fill.

3. **Dein** ewge Treu und Gnade,
o Vater, weiß und sieht,
was gut sei oder schade
dem sterblichen Geblüt;
und was du dann erlesen,
das treibst du, starker Held,
und bringst zum Stand und Wesen,
was deinem Rat gefällt.

4. **Weg** hast du allerwegen,
an Mitteln fehlt dir's nicht;
dein Tun ist lauter Segen,
dein Gang ist lauter Licht;
dein Werk kann niemand hindern,
dein Arbeit darf nicht ruhn,
wenn du, was deinen Kindern
ersprießlich ist, willst tun.

5. **Und** ob gleich alle Teufel
hier wollten widerstehn,
so wird doch ohne Zweifel
Gott nicht zurücke gehn;
was er sich vorgenommen
und was er haben will,
das muß doch endlich kommen
zu seinem Zweck und Ziel.

6. **Hoff**, o du arme Seele,
hoff und sei unverzagt!
Gott wird dich aus der Höhle,
da dich der Kummer plagt,
mit großen Gnaden rücken;
erwarte nur die Zeit,
so wirst du schon erblicken
die Sonn der schönsten Freud.

7. **Auf**, auf, gib deinem Schmerze
und Sorgen gute Nacht,
laß fahren, was das Herze
betrübt und traurig macht;
bist du doch nicht Regente,
der alles führen soll,
Gott sitzt im Regimente
und führet alles Wohl

8. **Ihn**, ihn laß tun und walten,
Er ist ein weiser Fürst
und wird sich so verhalten,
daß du dich wundern wirst,
wenn er, wie ihm gebühret,
mit wunderbarem Rat
das Werk hinausgeföhret,
das dich bekümmert hat.

9. A while His consolation
He may to thee deny,
And seem as though in trial
He far from thee would fly;
A while distress and anguish
May compass thee around,
Nor to thy supplication
An answering voice be found.

10. But if thou perseverest,
Thou shalt deliverance find.
Behold, all unexpected
He will thy soul unbind
And from the heavy burden
Thy heart will soon set free;
And thou wilt see the blessing
He had in mind for thee.

11. O faithful child of heaven,
How blessed shalt thou be!
With songs of glad thanksgiving
A crown awaiteth thee.
Into thy hand thy Maker
Will give the victor's palm.
And thou to thy Deliverer
Shalt sing a joyous psalm.

12. Give, Lord, this consummation
To all our heart's distress;
Our hands, our feet, e'er strengthen,
In death our spirits bless.
Thy truth and Thy protection
Grant evermore, we pray,
And in celestial glory
Shall end our destined way.

9. **Er** wird zwar eine Weile
mit seinem Trost verziehn
und tun an seinem Teile,
als hätt in seinem Sinn
er deiner sich begeben
und sollt'st du für und für
in Angst und Nöten schweben,
als frag er nichts nach dir.

10. **Wird's** aber sich befinden,
daß du ihm treu verbleibst,
so wird er dich entbinden,
das du's am mindesten glaubst;
er wird dein Herze lösen
von der so schweren Last,
die du zu keinem Bösen
bisher getragen hast.

11. **Wohl** dir, du Kind der Treue,
du hast und trägst davon
mit Ruhm und Dankgeschreie
den Sieg und Ehrenkron;
Gott gibt dir selbst die Palmen
in deine Rechte Hand,
und du singst Freudenpsalmen
dem, der dein Leid gewandt.

12. **Mach End**, o Herr, mach Ende
mit aller unrer Not;
stärt unsre Füß und Hände
und laß bis in den Tod
uns allzeit deiner Pflege
und Treu empfohlen sein,
so gehen unsre Wege,
gewiß zum Himmel ein.



St. Moritz, Mittenwalde



A HYMN OF PEACE AND COMFORT

“Gib dich zufrieden” “Be Thou Content”³

Psalm 37 might have been Paul Gerhardt’s favorite psalm. He wrote two hymns on that psalm. “Be Thou Content” which is based on Psalm 37:7 and “Commit Whatever Grieves Thee” based on Psalm 37:5.

So many of our lives lack peace. Our sins, work, sickness, weakness, loneliness, and finances threaten to take all contentment from life. The things that we struggle with bring guilt, worry, mistrust, and complaint. This is a hymn that brings peace, especially in the most difficult times. It shows life from the perspective of God and His faithfulness rather than from our struggles. It bids us to take heart.

The first five verses remind us who God is. He is our light (vs 1), comfort (vs 2), and friend (vs 3). Verses 3 and 4 have a reoccurring theme in Gerhardt’s hymns. Sometimes we wonder why God allows us to suffer so long. We plead for His help, but there seems to be no answer. God doesn’t only know our suffering. He knows how to relieve it at just the right time. Verse 5 reminds us again that God knows all of our griefs and hears our prayers.

The next five verses speak to us personally and examine our faith. God promises to be faithful to us. It is tempting to drown in our sorrow, but God want us to cling to Him in faith (vs 6) We might worry how we will survive, but remember who tells us to pray for our daily bread (vs 7) and who cares for all the creatures of this world. (vs 8) There are times when things seem hopeless, but it is exactly at such times when God proves His faithfulness. (vs 9) Verse 10 reminds us that God’s deliverance, which we wait long for, is all the sweeter when it comes.

The last five verses remind us of the realities that each person faces. Verse 11 speaks of our enemies and how they mock our faith. Even Job’s wife said, “Curse God and die.” (Job 2:9) But when God stands on our side, we ask with David, “What can man do to me?” (Ps 27:1) Verses 12 and 13, which are not in the English translation, remind us that no one is spared suffering in this life. But there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Heb 4:9) when Christ will call us from the sorrow of this world to His peace in heaven when He Himself will bid us, “Be thou content. (vs 14,15)

1. Be thou content; be still before
His face, at whose right hand doth reign
Fullness of joy forevermore,
Without whom all thy toil is vain.
He is thy living spring, thy sun, whose rays
Make glad with life and light thy dreary days.
Be thou content.

2. In Him is comfort, light and grace,
And changeless love beyond our thought;
The sorest pang, the worst disgrace,
If He is there, shall harm thee not.
He can lift off thy cross, and loose thy bands,
And calm thy fears, nay, death is in His hands.
Be thou content.

1. Gib dich zufrieden und sei stille
In dem Gotte deines Lebens;
In ihm ruht aller Freuden Fülle,
Ohn ihn mühst du dich vergebens.
Er ist dein Quell und deine Sonne,
Scheint täglich hell zu deiner Wonne.
Gib dich zufrieden.

2. Er ist voll Lichtes, Trosts und Gnaden,
Ungefärbtes, treuen Herzens;
Wo er steht, tut dir keinen Schaden
Auch die Pein des größten Schmerzens.
Kreuz, Angst und Not kann Er bald wenden:
Ja, auch den Tod hat Er in Händen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

³*Lyra Germanica*, Catherine Winkworth, 1855

3. Or art thou friendless and alone,
Hast none in whom thou canst confide?
God careth for thee, lonely one,
Comfort and help will He provide.
He see thy sorrow and thy hidden grief,
He knoweth when to see thee quick relief.
Be thou content.

4. Thy heart's unspoken pain He knows,
Thy secret sighs He hears full well,
What to none else thou dar'st disclose
To Him thou mayst with boldness tell;
He is not far away, but ever nigh,
And answereth willingly the poor man's cry.
Be thou content.

5. Be not o'er-mastered by thy pain,
But cling to God, thou shalt not fall;
The floods sweep over thee in vain,
Thou yet shalt rise above them all;
For when thy trial seems hard to bear,
Lo! God thy King, hath granted all thy prayer:
Be thou content.

7. Why art thou full of anxious fear
How thou shalt be sustained and fed?
He who hath made and placed thee here,
Will give thee needful daily bread;
Canst thou not trust His rich and gracious hand,
Who feeds all living things on sea and land?
Be thou content.

8. He who doth teach the little birds
To find their meat in field and wood,
Who gives the countless flocks and herds,
Each day their needful drink and food,
Thy hunger too will surely satisfy,
And all thy wants in His good time supply.
Be thou content.

9. Sayst thou, I know not how or where,
No help I see where'ere I turn;
When of all else we most despair,
The riches of God's love we learn;
When thou and I His hand no longer trace,
He leads us forth into a pleasant place.
Be thou content.

3. Wie dir's und andern oft ergehe,
Ist ihm wahrlich nicht verborgen:
Er sieht und kennet aus der Höhe
Der betrübten Herzen Sorgen.
Er zählt den Lauf der heißen Tränen
Und faßt zu Hauf all unser Sehnen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

4. Wann gar kein ein'ger mehr auf Erden,
Dessen Treue du darfst trauen,
Alsdann will er dein Treuster werden
Und zu deinem Besten schauen.
Er weiß dein Leid und heimlich Grämen,
Auch weiß er Zeit, dich zu benehmen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

5. Er hört die Seufzer deiner Seelen
Und des Herzens stilles Klagen;
Und was du keinem darfst erzählen,
Magst du Gott gar kühnlich sagen.
Er ist nicht fern, steht in der Mitten,
Hört bald und gern der Armen Bitten.
Gib dich zufrieden.

6. Laß dich dein Elend nicht bezwingen,
Halt an Gott, so wirst du siegen;
Ob alle Fluten einher gingen,
Dennoch mußt du oben liegen.
Denn wann du wirst zu hoch beschweret,
Hat Gott, dein Fürst, dich schon erhöret.
Gib dich zufrieden.

7. Was sorgst du für dein armes Leben,
Wie du's halten wollst und nähren?
Der dir das Leben hat gegeben,
Wird auch Unterhalt bescheren.
Er hat ein Hand voll aller Gaben,
Da See und Land sich muß von laben.
Gib dich zufrieden.

8. Der allen Vöglein in den Wäldern
Ihr bescheidnes Körnlein weiset,
Der Schaf und Rinder in den Feldern
Alle Tage tränkt und speiset,
Der wird ja auch dich ein'gen füllen
Und deinen Bauch zur Notdurft stillen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

9. Sprich nicht: Ich sehe keine Mittel,
Wo ich such, ist nichts zum Besten!
Dann das ist Gottes Ehrentitel:
Helfen, wann die Not am größten.
Wann ich und du ihn nicht mehr spüren,
Da schickt Er zu, uns wohl zu führen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

10. Though long His promised aid delay,
At last it will be surely sent:
Though thy heart sink in sore dismay,
The trial for thy good is meant.
What we have won with pains we hold more fast,
What tarrieth long is sweeter at the last.
Be thou content.

11. Lay not to heart whate'er of ill
Thy foes may falsely speak of thee,
Let man defame thee as he will,
God hears and judges righteously.
Why shouldst thou fear, if God be on thy side,
Man's cruel anger, or malicious pride?
Be thou content.

14. We know for us a rest remains,
When God will give us sweet release
From earth and all our mortal chains,
And turn our sufferings into peace.
Sooner or later death will surely come
To end our sorrow, and to take us home:
Be thou content.

15. Home to the chosen ones, who here
Served their Lord faithfully and well,
Who died in peace, without a fear,
And there in peace forever dwell;
The Everlasting is there joy and stay,
The Eternal Word Himself to them doth say,
Be thou content.

10. Bleibt gleich die Hülff in etwas lange,
Wird sie dennoch endlich kommen;
Macht dir das Harren angst und bange,
Glaube mir, es ist dein Frommen.
Was langsam schleicht, faßt man gewisser,
Und was verzeucht, ist desto süßer.
Gib dich zufrieden.

11. Nimm nicht zu Herzen, was die Rotten
Deiner Feinde von dir dichten;
Laß sie nur immer weidlich spotten,
Gott wird's hören und recht richten.
Ist Gott dein Freund und deiner Sachen,
Was kann dein Feind, der Mensch, groß machen?
Gib dich zufrieden.

12. Hat Er doch selbst auch wohl das Seine,
Wann Er's sehen könnt und wollte.
Wo ist ein Glück so klar und reine,
Dem nicht etwas fehlen sollte?
Wo ist ein Haus, das könnte sagen:
Ich weiß durchaus von keinen Plagen?
Gib dich zufrieden.

13. Es kann und mag nicht anders werden,
Alle Menschen müssen leiden;
Was webt und lebet auf der Erden,
Kann das Unglück nicht vermeiden.
Des Kreuzes Stab schlägt unsre Lenden
Bis in das Grab: da wird sich's enden.
Gib dich zufrieden.

14. Es ist ein Ruhetag verhanden,
Da uns unser Gott wird lösen;
Er wird uns reißen aus den Banden
Dieses Liebs und allem Bösen.
Es wird einmal der Tod herspringen
Und aus der Qual uns sämtlich bringen.
Gib dich zufrieden.

15. Er wird uns bringen zu den Scharen
Der Erwählten und Getreuen,
Die hier mit Frieden abgefahren,
Sich auch nun im Friede freuen,
Da sie den Grund, der nicht kann brechen,
Den ewgen Mund selbst hören sprechen:
Gib dich zufrieden.

„Ich habe Paul Gerhardt nicht in der Kirche kennen gelernt“. Wir studierten damals im Unterricht ein Lied von ihm ein. „Gib dich zufrieden“ und das war der Anfang für mich. Paul Gerhardts Texte sprechen mich in besonderer Art und Weise an. Er bringt viel Persönliches ein, in dem ich mich selbst wiederfinde. Trotz aller Schicksalsschläge verlor er nie seine Hoffnung, - er wusste, er ist nur ein Gast auf Erden.“ Sarah Kaiser

HYMN OF JOY

Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen (375)

Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me (TLH 523, LW 423)

This is a very beautiful hymn by Paul Gerhardt, both poetically and rhythmically, but very difficult to translate, which makes every English translation lacking in the beauty of Gerhardt's German. The metric pattern of the rhythm, was an invention of Gerhardt.

Paul Gerhardt based this hymn of joy on Psalm 73, especially verses 23-26.

Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Just as in Psalm 73 we see how crosses, sadness, death, and distress even come to the Christian. But the treasures of this life are not what the Christian clings to anyway. They are like sand that pours from our hand. In Christ we have treasures that will last forever. The greatest gift is that Christ is near, and He is ours. He is the helper who knows how to end our suffering. He gives us good days and tempers our ill. Even death cannot destroy the Christian. It only opens the way to heaven's eternal glory. Why can we be so sure of God's goodness and always rejoice? That question is answered in verse 7.

Thousands of Christians throughout the centuries have found new joy and comfort from this hymn. The Lutheran Salzburger, some of whom settled in Georgia in 1734, sang it as they marched through Swabia after being expelled from their homeland by the Roman Catholic authorities. Verse 8 were the last words of Gerhardt before his death on May 27, 1676. His own hymns often brought much joy and comfort to him and his family.

1. Why should cross and trial grieve me?

Christ is near With His cheer;
Never will He leave me.
Who can rob me of the heaven
That God's Son For my own
To my faith hath given?

1. Warum sollt' ich mich denn grämen?

Hab' ich doch Christum noch,
wer will mir den nehmen?
Wer will mir den Himmel rauben.
Den mir schon Gottes Sohn
beigelegt im Glauben?

2. Nackend lag ich auf dem Boden,
da ich kam, da ich nahm
meinen ersten Odem;
nackend werd ich auch hinziehen,
wenn ich werd von der Erd
als ein Schatten fliehen.

3. Gut und Blut, Leib, Seel und Leben
ist nicht mein; Gott allein
ist es, ders gegeben;
will ers wieder zu sich kehren,
nehm ers hin, ich will ihn
dennoch fröhlich ehren.

4. Though a heavy cross I'm bearing
And my heart Feels the smart,
Shall I be despairing?
God, my Helper, who doth send it,
Well doth know All my woe
And how best to end it.

4. Schickt er mir ein Kreuz zu tragen.
Dringt herein Angst und Pein.
Sollt' ich drum verzagen?
Der es schickt, der wird es wenden!
Er weiss wohl, wie er soll
all mein Unglück enden.

5. God oft gives me days of gladness;
Shall I grieve If He give
Seasons, too, of sadness?
God is good and tempers ever
All my ill, And He will
Wholly leave me never.

7. Hopeful, cheerful, and undaunted
Everywhere They appear
Who in Christ are planted.
Death itself cannot appal them,
They rejoice When the voice
Of their Lord doth call them.

8. Death cannot destroy forever;
From our fears, Cares, and tears
It will us deliver.
It will close life's mournful story,
Make a way That we may
Enter heavenly glory.

10. What is all this life possesses?
But a hand Full of sand
That the heart distresses.
Noble gifts that pall me never
Christ, our Lord, Will accord
To His saints forever.

12. Lord, my Shepherd, take me to Thee.
Thou art mine; I was Thine,
Even e'er I knew Thee.
I am Thine, for Thou hast bought me;
Lost I stood, But Thy blood
Free salvation brought me.

13. Thou art mine; I love and own Thee.
Light of Joy, Ne'er shall I
From my heart dethrone Thee.
Savior, let me soon behold Thee
Face to face, May Thy grace
Evermore enfold me!

5. Gott hat mich bei guten Tagen
oft ergetzt: sollt' ich jetzt
nicht auch etwas tragen?
Fromm ist Gott und schärft mit Maßen
sein Gericht, kaum mich nicht
ganz und gar verlassen.

6. Satan, Welt, und ihre Rotten
können mir nichts mehr hier
tun als meiner spotten;
laß sie spotten, laß sie lachen,
Gott, mein Heil, wird in Eil
sie zu Schanden machen.

7. Unverzagt und ohne Grauen
soll ein Christ, wo er ist,
stets sich lassen schauen.
Wollt ihn auch der Tod aufreiben,
soll der Mut dennoch gut
und sein stille bleiben.

8. Kann uns doch kein Tod nicht töten,
sondern reißt unsern Geist
aus viel tausend Nöten.
Schließt das Tor der bittern Leiden
und macht Bahn, da man kann
gehn zu Himmelsfreuden.

9. Allda will mit süßen Schätzen
ich mein Herz auf den Schmerz
ewiglich ergötzen;
hier ist kein recht Gut zu finden;
was die Welt in sich hält,
muß im Hui verschwinden.

10. Was sind dieses Lebens Güter?
Eine Hand voller Sand,
Kummer der Gemüter.
Dort, dort sind die edlen Gaben,
Da mein Hirt, Christus wird
mich ohn' Ende laben.

12. Herr, mein Hirt, Brunn aller Freuden,
du bist mein, ich bin dein,
niemand kann uns scheiden:
ich bin dein, weil du dein Leben
und dein Blut mir zugut
in den Tod gegeben.

13. Du bist mein, weil ich dich fasse
und dich nicht, o mein Licht,
aus dem Herzen lasse.
Laß mich, laß mich hingelangen,
da du mich und ich dich
leiblich werd umfassen!

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

Nun Danket All und Bringet Ehr (German 348)

All Ye Who on This Earth Do Dwell (TLH 581)

This hymn is based on the High Priest Simon's prayer of thanksgiving in the 50th chapter of the Book of Sirach in the Apocrypha, where it says,

Then Simon came down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, to pronounce the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to glory in His name; and they bowed down in worship a second time, to receive the blessing from the Most High: "And now bless the God of all, who in every way does great things, who exalts our days from birth, and deals with us according to His mercy, May He give us gladness of heart, and grant that peace may be in our days in Israel as in the days of old. May He entrust to us His mercy! And let Him deliver us in our days!" (Sirach 50:20-24)

This is the same place that the hymn "Nun Danket Alle Gott" ("Now Thank We All Our God") is based on. Because of their common origin both hymn are similar in many ways.

Paul Gerhardt carefully follows the prayer. He makes every phrase of it into a verse in this hymn. The first verse is based on the phrase, "Now bless the Lord of all." The second verse is based on, "Who in every way does great things." The third verse is based on, "Who exalts our days from birth," and adds the idea that God is a help in every need. "And deals with us according to His mercy," inspires the fourth verse to which Gerhardt properly adds, "die Straf erläßt, die Sünd' vergibt," (In grace He lays His anger by). In verse 5 Gerhardt explains what "gladness of heart is", that our heart and mind are at peace and free of fear. The petition for peace in our land is taken up in the sixth verse and the petition for God's mercy in the seventh verse. Finally, the phrase "And let Him deliver us in our days," is developed in the last verse with a special emphasis on the hope of everlasting life through our Savior Jesus Christ.

The hymn was written in celebration of the Peace of Westphalia, which brought to an end the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648), probably the most devastating war Europe ever experienced. It was first published in 1648.

1. All ye who on this earth do dwell,
Give thanks and glorify
The Lord whose praises ever swell
In seraph songs on high.

2. Lift up your hearts in praise to God,
Himself best Gift of all,
Who works His wonders all abroad,
Upholding great and small.

3. Since first our life began to be,
He has preserved our frame;
And when men's strength was vanity,
He as our helper came.

1. Nun danket all und bringet Ehr,
ihr Menschen in der Welt,
dem, dessen Lob der Engel Herr
im Himmel stets vermeldt.

2. Ermuntert euch und singt mit Schall
Gott, unserm höchsten Gut,
der seine Wunder überall
und große Dinge tut.

3. Der uns von Mutterleibe an
frisch und gesund erhält
und, wo kein Mensch nicht helfen kann,
sich selbst zum Helfer stellt.

4. Though often we His patience try
And well deserve His frown,
In grace He lays His anger by
And pours new blessings down.

5. 'Tis He revives our fainting soul,
Gives joyful hearts to men;
And when great waves of trouble roll,
He drives them back again.

6. May He adorn with precious peace
Our own, our native land
And crown with joys that never cease
The labors of our hand.

7. His love and goodness may He let
In and around us be,
All that may frighten us and fret
Cast far into the sea.

8. Long as we tarry here below
Our saving Health is He;
And when from earth to heaven we go,
May He our Portion be! Amen.

9. He giveth His beloved sleep
When these frail heart-beats cease;
And in His presence then will keep
Our souls in endless peace.

4. Der, ob wir ihn gleich hoch betrübt,
doch bleibet gutes Muts,
die Straf erläßt, die Schuld vergibt
und tut und alles Guts.

5. Er gebe uns ein fröhlich Herz,
erfrische Geist und Sinn
und werf all Angst, Furcht, Sorg und Schmerz
in's Meeres Tiefe hin.

6. Er lasse seine Frieden ruhn
auf unserm Volk und Land;
er gebe Glück zu unserm Tun
und Heil zu allem Stand.

7. Er lasse seine Lieb' und Güt;
um, bei und mit uns gehn,
was aber ängstet und bemüht,
gar ferne von uns stehn.

8. Solange dieses Leben währt,
sei er stets unser Heil,
und wenn wir scheiden von der Erd,
verbleib er unser Teil.

9. Er drücke, wenn das Herze bricht,
uns unsre Augen zu
und zeig uns drauf sein Angesicht
dort in der ewgen Ruh.



St Nicholas Church, Berlin



Crüger's *Praxis Pietatis Melica*

HYMN OF PRAISE

Sollt' ich meinem Gott nicht singen" (German 351) *I Will Sing My Maker's Praises (TLH 25, LW 439)*

This is perhaps Paul Gerhardt's finest hymn. It sets forth God's love in His creation, redemption, and sanctification of the world. The refrain "Alles Ding währt seine Zeit, Gottes Lieb' in Ewigkeit," (All things else have but their day, God's great love abides for aye) shows the reason for the Christian's praise and thanksgiving, God's eternal love.

This hymn of praise came from a heart, which was full of trust in God. The words are much more than beautiful poetry. They are what Paul Gerhardt believed and took comfort in. He had suffered many things in life, which could have given him fear, worry, and want. Instead he wanted to praise God. The hymn isn't rapturous or sentimental, but thoughtful and contemplative. It gives God glory and thanks for all the blessing of body and soul. It extols God's great love for us and is a catalog of all God's blessings to us.

This is a hymn, which can give us comfort and joy throughout our lives. A famous story about the hymn illustrates its comfort. An upright man, who worked on the grounds of Karl Duke of Württemberg, fell into dislike by those who were under him. He was despised so much that the Duke eventually fired him. In his need, he returned to his home town, where he was given the job of night-watchman. Every hour after the bell tolled, he sang a part of this hymn for his and his town's comfort. That went on night after night until one of the duke's officials happened to stay in the village one night because his carriage broke down. He heard the hourly toll and then the poem of the things of this world, which have their day, and of God's love, which will outlast all time. He asked about this odd custom and was told the story of the watchman. Eventually, he told the duke about this man's plight, and spoke on his behalf. The duke's heart was moved, and he ordered an investigation into the matter. The man was found to be innocent, and he was given his former position back. He experienced God's presence and help firsthand, which Gerhardt wrote about in vs. 7.

The English translation has only 6 of the 12 verses (1,3,5,7,9,12). The tune may be a little difficult for modern ears. But the Christian who masters it and learns the text, will have a treasure, which will give joy and comfort throughout life. (The tune "Let us ever Walk with Jesus" was written for this hymn and is easier to sing.)

1. I will sing my Maker's praises
And in Him most joyful be,
For in all things I see traces
Of His tender love to me.
Nothing else than love could move Him
With such sweet and tender care
Evermore to raise and bear
All who try to serve and love Him.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

1. Sollt ich meinen Gott nicht singen?
Sollt ich ihm nicht fröhlich sein,
Denn ich seh in allen Dingen,
wie so gut ers mit mir mein'.
Ist doch nichts als lauter Lieben,
das sein treues Herze regt,
das ohn Ende hebt und trägt,
die in seinem Dienst sich üben.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

2. Wie ein Adler sein Gefieder
über seine Jungen streckt,
also hat auch hin und wieder
mich des Höchsten Arm bedeckt,
alsobald im Mutterleibe,
da er mir mein Wesen gab,
und das Leben, das ich hab
und noch diese Stunde treibe.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

3. Yea, so dear did He esteem me
That His Son He loves so well
He hath given to redeem me
From the quenchless flames of hell.
O Thou Spring of boundless blessing,
How could e'er my feeble mind
Of Thy depth the bottom find
Though my efforts were unceasing?
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

5. All that for my soul is needful
He with loving care provides,
Nor of that is He unheedful
Which my body needs besides.
When my strength cannot avail me,
When my powers can do no more,
Doth my God His strength outpour;
In my need He doth not fail me.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

7. When I sleep, He still is near me,
O'er me rests His guardian eye;
And new gifts and blessings cheer me
When the morning streaks the sky.
Were it not for God's protection,
Had His countenance not been
Here my guide, I had not seen
E'er the end of my affliction.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

3. Sein Sohn ist ihm nicht zu teuer,
nein, er gibt ihn für mich hin,
daß er mich vom ewgen Feuer
durch sein teures Blut gewinn.
"O du unergründter Brunnen,
wie will doch mein schwacher Geist,
ob er sich gleich hoch befließt,
deine Tief ergründen können?"
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

4. Seinen Geist, den edlen Führer,
gibt er mir in seinem Wort,
daß er werde mein Regierer
durch die Welt zur Himmelsport;
daß er mir mein Herz erfülle
mit dem hellen Glaubenslicht,
das des Todes Macht zerbricht
und die Hölle selbst macht stille.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

5. Meiner Seele Wohlergehen
hat er ja recht wohl bedacht;
will dem Leibe Not entstehen,
nimmt ers gleichfalls wohl in acht.
Wenn mein Können, mein Vermögen
nichts vermag, nichts helfen kann,
kommt mein Gott und hebt mir an
sein Vermögen beizulegen
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

6. Himmel, Erd und ihre Heere
hat er mir zum Dienst bestellt;
wo ich nur mein Aug hinkehre,
find ich, was mich nährt und hält:
Tier und Kräuter und Getreide;
in den Gründen, in der Höh,
in den Büschen, in der See,
überall ist meine Weide.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

7. Wenn ich schlafe, wacht sein sorgen
und ermuntert mein Gemüt,
daß ich alle liebe Morgen
schaue neue Lieb und Güt.
Wäre mein Gott nicht gewesen,
hätte mich sein Angesicht
nicht geleitet, wär ich nicht
aus so mancher Angst genesen.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

9. As a father never turneth
Wholly from a wayward child,
For the prodigal still yearneth,
Longing to be reconciled,
So my many sins and errors
Find a tender, pardoning God,
Chastening frailty with His rod,
Not in vengeance, with His terrors.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

12. Since, then, neither change nor coldness
In my Father's love can be,
Lo! I lift my hands with boldness,
As Thy child I come to Thee.
Grant me grace, O God, I pray Thee,
That I may with all my might,
All my lifetime, day and night,
Love and trust Thee and obey Thee
And, when this brief life is o'er,
Praise and love Thee evermore.

8. Wie so manche schwere Plage
wird vom Satan hergeführt,
die mich doch mein Lebetage
niemals noch bisher gerührt!
Gottes Engel, den er sendet,
hat das Böse, was der Feind
anzurichten ist gemeint,
in die Ferne weggewendet.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

9. Wie ein Vater seinem Kinde
sein Herz niemals ganz entzeucht,
ob es gleich bisweilen Sünde
tut und aus den Bahnen weicht,
also hält auch mein Verbrechen
mir mein frommer Gott zugut,
will mein Flehen mit der Rut
und nicht mit dem Schwerte rächen.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

10. Seine Strafen, seine Schläge,
ob sie mir gleich bitter seind,
dennoch, wenn ichs recht erwäge,
sind es Zeichen, daß mein Freund,
der mich liebet, mein gedenke
und mich von der schnöden Welt,
die uns hart gefangen hält,
durch das Kreuze zu ihm lenke.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

11. Das weiß ich fürwahr und lasse
mirs nicht aus dem Sinne gehn:
Christenkreuz hat seine Maße
und muß endlich stillestehn.
Wenn der Winter ausgeschneiet,
tritt der schöne sommer ein;
also wird auch nach der Pein,
wers erwarten kann, erfreuet.
Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,
Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.

12. "Weil denn weder Ziel noch Ende
sich in Gottes Liebe findt,
ei so heb ich meine Hände
zu dir, Vater, als dein Kind,
bitte, wollst mir Gnade geben,
dich aus aller meiner Macht
zu umfassen Tag und Nacht
hier in meinem ganzen Leben,
bis ich dich nach dieser Zeit
lob und lieb in Ewigkeit."

ADVENT HYMN

Wie soll ich dich empfangen (German 44) *O Lord, How Shall I Greet Thee (TLH 58, LW 19)*

This is one of Gerhardt's finest hymns, and perhaps the best Advent hymn in the hymnal. In his sermon for the 3rd Sunday in Advent Pastor Friedrich Krummacker remarked about it in 1868, "As often as I hear this hymn, there is a ray of springtime which shines through the darkness of winter, and I feel raised up as if the gracious Prince of Peace is personally coming to me to rescue my poor heart from all its pain and sorrow."

The *theme* for the hymn is how shall we greet our Lord and meet Him. It is based on Jesus' entrance in Jerusalem and on the parable of the 10 virgins. The *mood* of the hymn is joyful anticipation of the Lord's coming in which we forget our worries, sorrows, and troubles, and we look forward to our Lord's presence with us at Christmas, in our hearts, and in eternity.

From suffering to joy, from shame to honor. That is what Gerhardt wrote in his heart, and what he teaches us in this hymn. It is Advent! Leave your worries and cares behind. Your Savior is coming with love and mercy to comfort sinners. Your waiting won't be in vain. His great Advent is a hand. "Amen, come Lord Jesus."

Paul Gerhardt knew God's love firsthand, which searches and finds the oppressed, the distressed, and the sinners. Therefore he comfort us, "Despair not! He is near you, Yea standing at the door, Who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more."

This hymn especially stresses Jesus' incarnation and his presence with us now, but Vs. 10 also tells about our Lord's return as judge and hope to those who know Him as their Savior.

1. O Lord how shall I meet Thee,
How welcome Thee aright?
Thy people long to greet Thee
My hope, my hearts delight!
O kindle, Lord, most holy,
Thy lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please Thee best.

2. Thy Zion strews before Thee
Green boughs and fairest palms,
And I, too, will adore Thee
With joyous songs and psalms.
My heart shall bloom forever
For Thee with praises new
And from Thy name shall never
Withhold the honor due.

3. What hast Thou left ungranted
To give me glad relief?
When soul and body panted
In utmost depth of grief,
In deepest degradation,
Devoid of joy and peace,
Then, Thou, my soul's salvation,
Didst come to bring release.

1. Wie soll ich dich empfangen
und wie begegn ich dir,
o aller Welt Verlangen,
o meiner Seelen Zier?
O Jesu, Jesu, setze
mir selbst die Fackel bei,
damit, was dich ergötze,
mir kund und wissend sei.

2. Dein Zion streut dir Palmen
und grüne Zweige hin,
und ich will dir in Psalmen
ermuntern meinen Sinn.
Mein Herze soll dir grünen
in stetem Lob und Preis
und deinem Namen dienen,
so gut es kann und weiß.

3. Was hast du unterlassen
zu meinem Trost und Freud,
als Leib und Seele saßen
in ihrem größten Leid?
Als mir das Reich genommen,
da Fried und Freude lacht,
da bist du, mein Heil, kommen
und hast mich froh gemacht.

4. I lay in fetters, groaning,
Thou com'st to set me free;
I stood my shame bemoaning,
Thou com'st to honor me;
A glory Thou dost give me,
A treasure safe on high,
That will not fail or leave me
As earthly riches fly.

5. Love caused Thy incarnation,
Love brought Thee down to me;
Thy thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling,
That led Thee to embrace,
In love all love excelling,
Our lost and fallen race!

6. Rejoice, then, ye sad-hearted,
Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o'er joys departed
And tremble at your doom.
Despair not, He is near you,
yea standing at the door,
who best can help and cheer you
And bids you weep no more.

7. Ye need not toil nor languish
Nor ponder day and night
How in the midst of anguish
Ye draw Him by your might.
He comes, He comes all willing,
Moved by His love alone,
Your woes and troubles stilling;
For all to Him are known.

8. Sin's debt, that fearful burden,
Let not your souls distress;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon
And cover by His grace.
He comes, for men procuring
The peace of sin forgiven,
For all God's sons securing
Their heritage in heaven.

9. What though the foes be raging,
Heed not their craft and spite;
Your Lord, the battle waging,
Will scatter all their might
He comes, a King most glorious,
And all His earthly foes
In vain His course victorious
Endeavor to oppose.

10. He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A Light of consolations
And blessed Hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Thy beams so cheering,
And guide us safely home.

4. Ich lag in schweren Banden,
du kommst und machst mich los;
ich stand in Spott und Schanden,
du kommst und machst mich groß
und hebst mich hoch zu Ehren
und schenkst mir großes Gut,
das sich nicht läßt verzehren,
wie irdisch Reichtum tut.

5. Nichts, nichts hat dich getrieben
zu mir vom Himmelszelt
als das geliebte Lieben,
damit du alle Welt
in ihren tausend Plagen
und großen Jammerlast,
die kein Mund kann aussagen,
so fest umfassen hast.

6. Das schreib dir in dein Herze,
du hochbetrübt's Herr,
bei denen Gram und Schmerze
sich häuft je mehr und mehr;
seid verzagt, ihr habet
die Hilfe vor der Tür;
der eure Herzen labet
und tröstet, steht allhier.

7. Ihr dürft euch nicht bemühen
noch sorgen Tag und Nacht,
wie ihr ihn wollet ziehen
mit eures Armes Macht.
Er kommt, er kommt mit Willen,
ist voller Lieb und Lust,
all Angst und Not zu stillen,
die ihm an euch bewußt.

8. Auch dürft ihr nicht erschrecken
vor eurer Sündenschuld;
nein, Jesus will sie decken
mit seiner Lieb und Huld.
Er kommt, er kommt den Sündern
zum Trost und wahren Heil,
schafft, daß bei Gottes Kindern
verbleib ihr Erb und Teil.

9. Was fragt ihr nach dem Schreien
der Feind und ihrer Tück?
Der Herr wird sie zerstreuen
in einem Augenblick.
Er kommt, er kommt, ein König,
dem wahrlich alle Feind
auf Erden viel zu wenig
zum Widerstande seind.

10. Er kommt zum Weltgerichte:
zum Fluch dem, der ihm flucht,
mit Gnad und Süßem Lichte
dem, der ihn liebt und sucht.
Ach komm, ach komm, o Sonne,
und hol uns allzumal
zum ewgen Licht und Wonne
in deinen Freudensaal.

CHRISTMAS HYMN

Kommt und laßt uns Christus ehren (German 451) *Come, your Hearts and Voices Raising (TLH 90, LW 48)*

One of the most beloved Christmas carols of the middle ages was the Quemapas Celebration (LW 54, "He whom Shepherds once Came Praising"). Children would go through the streets, singing this Latin hymn at the doors of the houses. Paul Gerhardt based this Christmas hymn on that well-known hymn and melody.

In his Christmas hymns Gerhardt celebrates the festival when God comes to us, and even more than that, when God comes *for* us. There is a happy exchange in his hymns where Christ comes to take our poverty, misery, and sin, and gives us the treasures of forgiveness, peace, and joy. Christ's birth has brought a new reality. The door to true joy is open, and whoever takes these hymns to heart, goes joyfully through that door.

In verse 1 Gerhardt is like the cantor of a congregation, calling us all to praise our Lord, who has come to us.

In verses 2-6 we sing of the blessings of Christ's incarnation. Sin, death and satan are moaning and groaning, while we cast away every care (2). God gave His Son to guide us from the woes of this life to heaven's joy (3); to save us from the devil (4), all the powers of hell (5), and our own sins and griefs (6).

In the last two verses we are urged to trust in this Savior who has come to us. Verse 7 talks of the joy of all who trust in Christ, and verse 8 is a prayer that God will bring us to where angel choirs are now singing His praises.

It's interesting that when this hymn was first published. Gerhardt was in tremendous need and distress. The government had deposed him from his congregation; he had lost 4 of his 5 children, and his wife was seriously ill. (Within a year he would lose her.) Despite his troubles he gives us this beautiful hymn that exhorts us to praise our Lord and cast away our cares, for He has come to bring forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation. Our Lord brings true joy and peace in any circumstance in life.

1. Come, your hearts and voices raising,
Christ the Lord with gladness praising;
Loudly sing His love amazing,
Worthy folk of Christendom.

2. Sin and death may well be groaning,
Satan now may well be moaning;
We, our full salvation owning,
Cast our every care away.

3. See how God, for us providing,
Gave His Son and life abiding;
He our weary steps is guiding
From earth's woe to heavenly joy.

1. Kommt und laßt uns Christus ehren,
Herz und Sinnen zu ihm kehren;
singet fröhlich, laßt euch hören,
wertes Volk der Christenheit.

2. Sünd und Hölle mag sich grämen,
Tod und Teufel mag sich schämen;
wir, die unser Heil annehmen,
werfen allen Kummer hin.

3. Sehet, was hat Gott gegeben:
seinen Sohn zum ewgen Leben.
Dieser kann und will uns heben
aus dem Leid in's Himmels Freud.

4. Christ from heaven to us descending
And in love our race befriending,
In our need His help extending,
Saved us from the wily Foe.

5. Jacob's star in all its splendor
Beams with comfort sweet and tender,
Forcing Satan to surrender,
Breaking all the powers of hell.

6. From the bondage that oppressed us,
From sins's fetters that possessed us,
From the grief that sore distressed us,
We the captives, now are free.

7. Oh, the joy beyond expressing
When by faith we grasp this blessing
And to Thee we come confessing,
That our freedom Thou hast wrought!

8. Gracious Child, we pray Thee, hear us,
From Thy lowly manger cheer us,
Gently lead us and be near us
Till we join the angelic choir.

4. Seine Seel ist uns gewogen,
Lieb und Gunst hat ihn gezogen,
uns, die Satanas betrogen
zu besuchen aus der Höh.

5. Jakobs Stern ist aufgegangen,
stillt das sehnliche Verlangen,
bricht den Kopf der alten Schlangen
und zerstört der Höllen Reich.

6. Unser Kerker, da wir saßen
Und mit Sorgen ohne Massen
Uns das Herze selbst abfrassen,
Ist entzwei, und wir sind frei.

7. O du hochgesegn'te Stunde,
da wir das von Herzensgrunde
glauben und mit unserm Munde
danken dir, o Jesulein.

8. Schönstes Kindlein in dem Stalle,
sei uns freundlich, bring uns alle
dahin, wo mit süßem Schalle
dich der Engel Herr erhöht!



Paul Gerhardt Church, Lübben



Lübben, Chancel

CHRISTMAS HYMN

Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen (German 20) *All My Heart this Night Rejoices (TLH 77, LW 39)*

This hymn is widely known in German circles. It is not very well-known in English, but it deserves to be introduced into our Christmas heritage, especially because of its clear and simple presentation of the purpose of our Lord's birth.

The hymn has a beautiful structure.

First a trumpet blast: Christ is born; God's Champion has appeared as a bridegroom from His chamber (1,2).

In the following 4 stanzas the poet sets forth the mighty value of the Incarnation: Is it not love when God gives us the Son of His Love (3), the Kingdom of Joy (4), and His fellowship (5)? Yes, Christ is indeed the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world (6).

Now the poet places himself as herald by the cradle of the divine Child (7). He bids, as in Matthew 11:28, all men (8), all that labor (9), all the heavy laden (10), and all the poor (11), to draw near.

In conclusion, he approaches the cradle in supplication, just as the shepherds and the Wise Men did (12-15). He adores the Child as his Source of life (12), his Lamb of God (13), his Glory (14), and promises to be ever true to Him (15). It is a glorious series of Christmas thought, laid as a garland on the manger at Bethlehem.⁴

As in so many of his hymns Gerhardt beautifully tells us what it means to be a Christian in this Christmas hymn. He begins with a wonderful recounting of what Christ's incarnation means for us (1-6); then he calls us to trust in Him (7-11); and finally He tells of the peace and joy of the Christian who trusts in Christ's salvation.

An alternate melody is *Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen* (LW 423; TLH 523)

1. All my heart this night rejoices
As I hear Far and near
Sweetest angel voices.
"Christ is born," their choirs are singing
Till the air Everywhere
Now with joy is ringing.

2. Forth today the Conqueror goeth,
Who the foe, Sin and woe,
Death and hell, o'erthroweth.
God is man, man to deliver;
His dear Son Now is one
With our blood forever.

1. Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen
Dieser Zeit, Da vor Freud'
Alle Engel singen.
Hört, hört, wie mit vollen Chören
Alle Luft Laute ruft:
Christus ist geboren!

2. Heute geht aus seiner Kammer
Gottes Held, Der die Welt
Reißt aus allem Jammer.
Gott wird Mensch dir, Mensch, zugute.
Gottes Kind, Das verbind't
Sich mit unserm Blute.

⁴Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal p. 64

3. Shall we still dread God's displeasure,
Who, to save, Freely gave
His most cherished Treasure?
To redeem us, He hath given
His own Son From the throne
Of His might in heaven.

4. Should He who Himself imparted
Aught withhold From the fold,
Leave us broken-hearted?
Should the Son of God not love us,
Who, to cheer Sufferers here,
Left His throne above us?

5. If our blessed Lord and Maker
Hated men, Would He then
Be of flesh partaker?
If He in our woe delighted,
Would He bear All the care
Of our race benighted?

6. He becomes the Lamb that taketh
Sin away And for aye
Full atonement maketh.
For our life His own He tenders
And our race, By His grace,
Meet for glory renders.

7. Hark! a voice from yonder manger,
Soft and sweet, Doth entreat:
"Flee from woe and danger.
Brethren, from all ills that grieve you
You are freed; All you need
I will surely give you."

8. Come, then, banish all your sadness,
One and all, Great and small;
Come with songs of gladness.
Love Him who with love is glowing;
Hail the Star, Near and far
Light and joy bestowing.

9. Ye whose anguish knew no measure,
Weep no more; See the door
To celestial pleasure.
Cling to Him, for He will guide you
Where no cross, Pain, or loss
Can again betide you.

3. Sollt' uns Gott nicht können hassen,
Der uns gibt, Was er liebt
Über alle Massen?
Gott gibt, unserm Leid zu wehren,
Seinen Sohn Aus dem Thron
Seiner Macht und Ehren.

4. Sollte von uns sein gekehret,
Der sein Reich Und zugleich
Sich uns selbst verehret?
Sollt' uns Gottes Sohn nicht lieben,
Der jetzt kommt, Von uns nimmt,
Was uns will betrüben?

5. Hätte für der Menschen Orden
Unser Heil Einen Greul,
Wär er nicht Mensch worden.
Hätt er Lust zu unserm Schaden,
Ei, so würd' Unsre Bürd'
Er nicht auf sich laden.

6. Er nimmt auf sich, was auf Erden
Wir getan, Gibt sich an,
Unser Lamm zu werden,
Unser Lamm, das für uns stirbet
Und bei Gott Für den Tod
Gnad' und Fried' erwirbet.

7. Nun, er liegt in seiner Krippen,
Ruft zu sich Mich und dich,
Spricht mit süßen Lippen:
Lasset fahr'n, o liebe Brüder,
Was euch quält, Was euch fehlt,
Ich bring' alles wieder.

8. Ei, so kommt und lasst uns laufen!
Stellt euch ein, Groß und klein,
Eilt mit großem Haufen!
Liebt den, der vor Liebe brennet;
Schaut den Stern, Der uns gern
Licht und Labsal gönnet.

9. Die ihr schwebt in grossen Leiden,
Sehet, hier Ist die Tür
Zu den wahren Freuden.
Faßt ihn wohl, er wird euch führen
An den Ort, Da hinfort
Euch kein Kreuz wird rühren.

10. Hither come, ye heavy-hearted,
Who for sin, Deep within,
Long and sore have smarted;
For the poisoned wound you're feeling
Help is near, One is here
Mighty for their healing.

11. Hither come, ye poor and wretched;
Know His will Is to fill
Every hand outstretched.
Here are riches without measure;
Here forget All regret,
Fill your hearts with treasure.

12. Let me in my arms receive Thee;
On Thy breast Let me rest,
Savior, ne'er to leave Thee.
Since Thou hast Thyself presented
Now to me, I shall be
Evermore contented.

13. Guilt no longer can distress me;
Son of God, Thou my load
Bearest to release me.
Stain in me Thou findest never;
I am clean, All my sin
Is removed forever.

14. I am pure, in Thee believing,
From Thy store Evermore
Righteous robes receiving.
In my heart I will enfold Thee,
Treasure rare, Let me there,
Loving, ever hold Thee.

15. Dearest Lord, Thee will I cherish.
Though my breath Fail in death,
Yet I shall not perish,
But with Thee abide forever
There on high, In that joy
Which can vanish never.

10. Wer sich fühlt beschwert im Herzen,
Wer empfind't Seine Sünd'
Und Gewissensschmerzen,
Sei getrost, hier wird gefunden,
Der in Eil' Machet heil
Die vergift'ten Wunden.

11. Die ihr arm seid und elende,
Kommt herbei, Füllet frei
Eures Glaubens Hände!
Hier sind alle guten Gaben
Und das Gold, Da ihr sollt
Euer Herz mit laben.

12. Süßes Heil, laß dich umfängen,
Laß mich dir, Meine Zier,
Unverrückt anhangen!
Du bist meines Lebens Leben;
Nun kann ich Mich durch dich
Wohl zufrieden geben.

13. Meine Schuld kann mich nicht drücken,
Denn du hast Meine Last
All' auf deinem Rücken.
Kein Fleck ist an mir zu finden,
Ich bin gar Rein und klar
Aller meiner Sünden.

14. Ich bin rein um deinetwillen;
Du gibst g'nug Ehr' und Schmuck,
Mich darein zu hüllen.
Ich will dich ins Herze schliessen;
O mein Ruhm, Edle Blum',
Laß dich recht geniessen!

15. Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren,
Ich will dir Leben hier,
Dir will ich abfahren;
Mit dir will ich endlich schweben
Voller Freud' Ohne Zeit
Dort im andern Leben.

LENTEN HYMN

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld (German 73) *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (TLH 142, LW 111)*

This hymn has been called the masterpiece of all passion hymns. In it Gerhardt looks at Jesus through the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29) He connects those words to Isaiah 53, which speaks of the suffering of God's servant who was pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities.

This hymn is not a retelling of the passion history. Instead Gerhardt gives us a parable about the Suffering Servant. He gives us a glimpse into the eternal decrees of God and makes us listeners of the dialogue between the Father and His Son, which took place before time and creation.

The Father says to His Son, "Go forth My Son, "And free men from the fear of death, From guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear, But by Thy Passion men shall share The fruit of Thy salvation." (Verse 2)

The Son's answer is amazing, "Yea, Father, yea most willingly I'll bear what Thou commandest." (Verse 3)

In verses 3 and 4 Gerhardt dwells on the wondrous love of God. He writes, "O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done! The Father offers up His Son! The Son, content, descendeth! O Love, how strong Thou art to save!" (Verse 3)

Verses 5-7 speak of the Christians response for the wonderful love which God has shown to us through His Son. "I'll treasure in my memory, O Lord, all Thou hast done for me, Thy gracious love adoring." (verse 6)

Verses 8-10 sing of the blessings that Christ's passion gives to the believer. It is our protection in danger, our joy in sadness, our greatest treasure, and our eternal righteousness in the joys of Heaven.

The German has 10 verses. The TLH omits verses 4,5,7,8. LW contains only verses 1,2,3,10.

1. A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of all men bearing;
And laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing!
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer;
Bears shame and stripes,
and wounds and death,
Anguish and mockery and saith,
"Willing all this I suffer."

2. This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend,
The Lamb of God, our Savior;
Him God the Father chose to send
To gain for us His favor.
"Go forth, My Son," the Father saith,
"And free men from the fear of death,
From guilt and condemnation.
The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by Thy passion men shall share
The fruit of Thy salvation."

1. Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld
der Welt und ihrer Kinder;
es geht und büßet in Geduld
die Sünden aller Sünder;
es geht dahin, wird matt und krank,
ergibt sich auf die Würgebank,
entsaget allen Freuden,
es nimmet an Schmach, Hohn und Spott,
Angst, Wunden, Striemen, Kreuz und Tod
und spricht: "Ich wills gern leiden."

2. Das Lämmlein ist der große Freund
und Heiland meiner Seelen;
den, den hat Gott zum Sündenfeind
und Sühner wollen wählen;
"Geh hin, mein Kind, und nimm dich an
der Kinder, die ich ausgetan
zur Straf und Zornesruten;
die Straf ist schwer, der Zorn ist groß,
du kannst und sollst sie machen los
durch Sterben und durch Blüten."

3. "Yea, Father, yea most willingly
I'll bear what Thou commandest;
My will conforms to Thy decree,
I do what Thou demandest."
O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done!
The Father offers up His Son!
The Son, content, descendeth!
O Love, how strong Thou art to save!
Thou beddest Him within the grave
Whose word the mountains rendeth.

4. Thou lay'st Him, Love upon the cross,
With nails and spear Him bruising;
Thou slay'st Him as a lamb, His loss
From soul and body oozing;
From body 'tis the crimson flood
Of precious sacrificial blood,
From soul, the strength of anguish.
My gain it is; sweet Lamb, to Thee
What can I give whose love to me
For me doth make Thee languish?

5. Lord, all my life I'll cleave to Thee,
Thy love fore'er beholding,
Thee ever, as Thou ever me,
With loving arms enfolding.
Yea, Thou shalt be my Beacon-light,
To guide me safe through death's dark night,
And cheer my heart in sorrow;
Henceforth myself and all that's mine
To Thee, my Savior, I consign,
From whom all things I borrow.

6. From morn till eve my theme shall be
Thy mercy's wondrous measure;
To sacrifice myself for Thee
Shall be my aim and pleasure.
My stream of life shall ever be
A current flowing ceaselessly,
Thy constant praise outpouring.
I'll treasure in my memory,
O Lord, all Thou hast done for me,
Thy gracious love adoring.

7. Enlarge my heart's own shrine, and swell,
To thee shall now be given
a treasure that doth far excel
The worth of earth and heaven.
Away with the Arabian gold,
With treasures of an earthly mold!
I've found a better jewel.
My priceless treasure, Lord, my God,
Is Thy most holy, precious blood,
Which flowed from wounds so cruel.

3. "Ja Vater, ja, von Herzensgrund,
leg auf ich will dirs tragen;
mein Wollen hängt an deinem Mund,
mein Wirken ist dein Sagen."
O Wunderlieb! O Liebesmacht!
du kannst, was nie kein Mensch gedacht,
Gott seinen Sohn abzwängen.
O Liebe! Liebe! du bist stark,
du streckst den ins Grab und Sarg,
vor dem die Felsen springen.

4. Du marterst ihn am Kreuzestamm
mit Nägeln und mit Spießen;
du schlachtest ihn als wie ein Lamm,
machst herz und Adern fließen,
das Herze mit der Seufzer Kraft,
die Adern mit dem edlen Saft
des purpurroten Blutes.
O süßes Lamm, was soll ich dir
erweisen dafür, daß du mir
erzeigest so viel gutes.

5. Mein Lebetage will ich dich
aus meinem Sinn nicht lassen;
dich will ich stets, gleichwie du mich,
mit Liebesarmen fassen.
Du sollst sein meines Herzens Licht,
und wann mein Herz in Stücken bricht,
sollst du mein Herze bleiben.
Ich will mich dir, mein höchster Ruhm,
hiermit zu deinem Eigentum
beständiglich verschreiben.

6. Ich will von deiner Lieblichkeit
bei Nacht und Tage singen,
mich selbst auch dir zu aller Zeit
zum Freudenopfer bringen.
Mein Bach des Lebens soll sich dir
und deinem Namen für und für
in Dankbarkeit ergießen,
und was du mir zu gut getan,
das will ich stets, so tief ich kann,
in mein Gedächtnis schließen.

7. Erweitere dich, mein Herzensschrein,
du sollst ein Schatzhaus werden
der Schätze, die viel größer sein,
als Himmel, Meer und Erden.
Weg mit dem Gold Arabia!
Weg Kalmus, Myrrhen, Kasia!
Ich hab ein Bessres funden.
Mein großer Schatz, Herr Jesu Christ,
ist dieses, was geflossen ist
aus deines Leibes Wunden.

8. This treasure ever I'll employ,
This every aid shall yield me;
In sorrow it shall be my joy,
In conflict it shall shield me;
In joy, the music of my feast,
And when all else has lost its zest,
This manna still shall feed me;
In thirst my drink; in want my food;
My company in solitude,
To comfort and to lead me.

9. Of death I am no more afraid,
New life from Thee is flowing;
Thy cross affords me cooling shade
When noonday's sun is glowing.
When by my grief I am opprest,
On Thee my weary soul shall rest
Serenely as on pillows.
Thou art my Anchor when by woe
My bark is driven to and fro
On trouble's surging billows.

10. And when Thy glory I shall see
And taste Thy kingdom's pleasure,
Thy blood my royal robe shall be,
My joy beyond all measure.
When I appear before Thy throne,
Thy righteousness shall be my crown,
With these I need not hide me.
And there in garments richly wrought
As Thine own bride, I shall be brought
To stand in joy beside Thee.

8. Das soll und will ich mir zu Nutz
zu allen Zeiten machen,
im Streite soll es sein mein Schutz,
in Traurigkeit mein Lachen,
in Fröhlichkeit mein Saitenspiel,
und wann mir nichts mehr schmecken will,
soll mich dies Manna speisen.
Im Durst solls sein mein Wasserquell,
in Einsamkeit mein Sprachgesell
zu Haus und auch auf Reisen.

9. Was schadet mir des Todes Gift?
Dein Blut das ist mein Leben;
wann mich der Sonnen Hitze trifft,
so kann mirs Schatten geben.
Setzt mir des Wehmuts Schmerzen zu,
so sind ich bei dir meine Ruh,
als auf dem Bett ein Kranker;
und wann des Kreuzes Ungestüm
mein Schiffllein treibet um und um,
so bist du dann mein Anker.

10. Wann endlich ich soll treten
ein in deines Reiches Freuden,
so soll dies Blut mein Purpur sein,
ich will mich darein kleiden.
Es soll sein meines Hauptes Kron,
in welcher ich will vor dem Thron
des höchsten Vaters gehen,
und dir, dem er mich anvertraut,
als eine wohlgeschückte Braut
an deiner Seiten stehen.



Image of Christ's wounded head, altar of St. Mortiz Church, Mittenwalde

LENTEN HYMN

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden (German 84) *O Sacred Head Now Wounded (TLH 172, LW 113)*

This is the best known Paul Gerhardt hymn. It is based on the Latin hymn, "Salve caput cruentatum," the seventh and last of a series of poems addressed to Christ on the cross, each poem addressing itself to a separate member of the Lord's body: the feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart, and head. These hymns were well-known to the people of Gerhardt's time and were attributed to St. Bernard. Gerhardt's free paraphrase of this hymn was published in 1656. It is quite possible that Gerhardt got the idea for this hymn from the painting of Christ's wounded head on the altar at Mittenwalde, his first congregation. That painting was in his direct line of vision whenever he faced the altar.

In this hymn Gerhardt places the Christian beneath the cross of our dying Lord. In verses 1-3 we observe His wounded, dying head. In verse 4 we confess that it was our sin that caused His suffering and death. In verse 5 we realize the great blessings, that His death has brought to us. So in verse 6 the Christian has no desire to abandon or be ashamed of our suffering Savior. To the contrary in verse 7 we rejoice in the salvation that our Savior has accomplished through His passion. So in verse 8 we thank our dearest Friend for His great love for us and pray that He would always keep us faithful to Him. Finally in verses 9 + 10, the Christian prays that when our last hour comes, our Savior would be near us and remind us of His passion, which has brought everlasting life to us.

Verses 9 + 10 have comforted thousands of Christians in their last hour. When the Lutheran missionary CFW Schwartz lay dying in India in 1798, his native pupils gathered around him, and sang the last stanzas in their own tongue. When Paul Gerhardt's wife lay on her death bed, she asked that He read his passion hymns, including these stanzas to her.

Verse 10 is based on Luther's moving words after the death of his 14 year old daughter Magdalena. He said to his friend Philip Melanchton, "When that child should come to life again and bring me the whole Turkish empire, I wouldn't want it. Who ever dies as she did, dies a blessed death. Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord". Just before she died, he asked her, "Magdalena, my dear little daughter, would you like to stay here with your father, or would you willingly go to your Father yonder? She answered, "Dear father, as God wills."

1. O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

2. Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee,
Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee
And flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish
That once was bright as morn!

3. Now from Thy cheeks has vanished
Their color, once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished
The splendor that was there.
Grim Death, with cruel rigor,
Hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou has lost Thy vigor,
Thy strength, in this sad strife.

1. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,
voll Scherz und voller Hohn,
o Haupt, zum Spott gebunden
mit einer Dornenkron',
o Haupt, sonst schön gezieret
mit höchster Ehr' und Zier,
jetzt aber höchst schimpfieret:
gegrüßet seist du mir!

2. Du edles Angesichte,
davor sonst schrickt und scheut
das große Weltgewichte,
wie bist du so bespeit!
Wie bist du so erbleichet!
wer hat dein Augenlicht,
dem sonst kein Licht nicht gleichet,
so schändlich zugericht?

3. Die Farbe deiner Wangen,
der roten Lippen Pracht
ist hin und ganz vergangen;
des blassen Todes Macht
hat alles hingenommen.
Hat alles hingerasst,
und daher bist du kommen
von deines Leibes Kraft.

4. My burden is Thy Passion,
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression
Which brought this woe on thee.
I cast me down before Thee,
Wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee;
Redeemer, spurn me not!

5. My Shepherd, now receive me;
My Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me,
O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me
With words of truth and love,
Thy Spirit oft hath led me
To heavenly joys above.

6. Here I will stand beside Thee,
From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me!
When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish
In death's cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish,
Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.

7. The joy can ne'er be spoken,
Above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken
I thus with safety hide.
O Lord of life, desiring
Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring,
I'd breathe my soul to Thee.

8. What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
Oh, make me thine forever!
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never,
Outlive my love for Thee.

9. My Savior, be Thou near me
When death is at my door;
Then let Thy presence cheer me,
Forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish,
Oh, leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish
By virtue of Thine own!

10. Be Thou my Consolation,
My Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee.
Who dieth thus dies well!

4. Nun, was du, Herr, erduldet,
ist alles meine Last;
ich hab' es selbst verschuldet,
was du getragen hast.
Schau her, hier steh' ich Armer,
der Zorn verdient hat;
gib mir, o mein Erbarmer,
den Anblick deiner Gnad'!

5. Erkenne mich, mein Hüter,
mein Hirte, nimm mich an!
Von dir, Quell aller Güter,
ist mir viel Gut's getan.
Dein Mund hat reich gelabet
mit Milch und süßer Kost;
dein Geist hat reich begabet
mit mancher Himmelslust.

6. Ich will hier bei dir stehen,
verachte mich doch nicht!
Von dir will ich nicht gehen,
wenn dir dein Herze bricht;
wenn dein Haupt wird erblassen
irn letzten Todesstoß,
alsdann will ich dich fassen
in meinen Arm und Schoß.

7. Es dient zu meinen Freuden
und kommt mir herzlich wohl,
wenn ich in deinem Leiden,
mein Heil, reich finden soll.
Ach, möcht' ich, o mein Leben,
an deinem Kreuze hier
mein Leben von mir geben,
wie woll geschehe mir!

8. Ich danke dir von Herzen,
o Jesu, liebster Freund,
für deines Todes Schmerzen,
da du's so gut gemeint.
Ach gib, daß ich mich halte
zu dir und deiner Treu'
und, wenn ich nun erkalte,
in dir mein Ende sei.

9. Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden,
so scheid nicht von mir;
wenn ich den Tod soll leiden,
so tritt du dann herfür;
wann mir am allerbängsten
wird um daß Herze sein,
so reiß reich aus den Ängsten
Kraft deiner Angst und Pein.

10. Erscheine mir zum Schilde,
zum Trost in meinem Tod,
und laß mich sehn dein Bilde
in deiner Kreuzesnot!
Da will ich nach dir blicken,
da will ich glaubensvoll
dich fest an mein Herz drücken.
Wer so stirbt, der stirbt wohl.

LENTEN HYMN

O Welt sieh hier dein Leben (German 89) *Upon the Cross Extended (TLH 171, LW 120,121)*

Here we have a profound meditation on our Lord's passion, which has impressed Christians throughout the centuries. Verses 3-5 were favorites of Johann Sebastian Bach, who used them in his *St. Matthew Passion* and *St. John Passion*.

The first half of the hymn sings of Christ's sufferings, both the cause (our sins) and the fruits of His suffering (our life). The second half gives thanks to the Lord for our salvation. Through His death for us we are bound to Him, and we resign our lives completely to Him to love as He has loved us.

It's interesting that the very center of the hymn is the reason for Christ's death for us at the end of verse 8, "O unerhörtes Liebesfeur"! (Of love, O unexampled fire) "No greater love has a man than this, that He lay down His life for His friends. (John 15:13)

1. Upon the cross extended,
See, world, thy Lord suspended,
Thy Savior yields His breath.
The Prince of Life from heaven
Himself hath freely given
To shame and blows and bitter death.

2. Come hither now and ponder,
'Twill fill thy soul with wonder,
Blood streams from every pore.
Through grief whose depth none knoweth,
From His great heart there floweth
Sigh after sigh of anguish o'er.

3. Who is it that hath bruised Thee?
Who hath so sore abused Thee
And caused Thee all Thy woe?
While we must make confession
Of sin and dire transgression,
Thou deeds of evil dost not know.

4. I caused Thy grief and sighing
By evils multiplying
As countless as the sands.
I caused the woes unnumbered
With which Thy soul is cumbered,
Thy sorrows raised by wicked hands.

5. Tis I who should be smitten
My doom should here be written:
Bound hand and foot in hell.
The fetters and the scourging.
The floods around Thee surging,
'Tis I who have deserved them well.

1. O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben
am Stamm des Kreuzes schweben,
dein Heil sinkt in den Tod!
Der große Fürst der Ehren
läßt willig sich beschweren
mit Schlägen, Hohn und grossem Spott.

2. Tritt her und schau mit Fleiße:
Sein Leib ist ganz mit Schweiß
des Blutes überfüllt;
aus seinem edlen Herzen
vor unerschöpften Schmerzen
ein Seufzer nach dem andern quillt.

3. Wer hat dich so geschlagen,
mein Heil und dich mit Plagen
so übel zugericht?
Du bist Ja nicht ein Sünder
wie wir und unsre Kinder
von Übeltaten weißt du nicht.

4. Ich, ich und meine Sünden,
die sich wie Körnlein finden
des Sandes an dem Meer,
die haben dir erreget
das Elend, das dich schläget,
und das betrübte Marterheer.

5. Ich bin's, ich sollte büßen,
an Händen und an Füßen
gebunden in der Hölle;
die Geißeln und die Banden
und was du ausgestanden,
das hat verdient meine Seel!

6. The load Thou takest on Thee,
That pressed so sorely on me,
It crushed me to the ground.
The cross for me enduring,
The crown for me securing,
My healing in Thy wounds is found.

7. A crown of thorns Thou wearest,
My shame and scorn Thou bearest,
That I might ransomed be.
My Bondsman, ever willing,
My place with patience filling,
From sin and guilt hast made me free.

8. Into death's Jaws Thou springest,
Deliverance to me bringest
From such a monster dire.
My death away Thou takest,
Thy grave its grave Thou makest;
Of love, O unexampled fire!

9. Thy cords of love, my Savior,
Bind me to Thee forever,
I am no longer mine.
To Thee I gladly tender
All that my life can render
And all I have to Thee resign.

10. Not much can I be giving
In this poor life I'm living,
But one thing do I say:
Thy death and sorrows ever,
Till soul from body sever,
My heart remember shall for aye

11. Thy cross I'll place before me.
Its saving power be o'er me,
Wherever I may be;
Thine innocence revealing,
Thy love and mercy sealing,
The pledge of truth and constancy.

10. How God at our transgression
To anger gives expression,
How loud His thunder rolls,
How fearfully He smiteth,
How sorely He requiteth,
All this Thy sufferings teach my soul.

6. Du nimmst deinen Rücken
die Lasten, die mich drücken
viel schwerer als ein Stein.
Du wirst ein Fluch, dagegen
verehrst du mir den Segen,
dein Schmerzen muß mein Labsal sein.

7. Du setzest dich zum Bürgen,
ja läßest dich gar würgen
für mich und meine Schuld.
Mir läßest du dich krönen
mit Dornen, die dich höhnen,
und leidest alles mit Geduld.

8. Du springst ins Todes Rachen,
mich frei und los zu machen
von solchem Ungeheur.
Mein Sterben nimmst du abe,
vergräbst es in dem Grabe,
o unerhörtes Liebesfeur.

9 Ich bin, mein Heil, verbunden
all' Augenblick und Stunden
dir überhoch und sehr.
Was Leib und Seel' vermögen,
das soll ich billig legen
Allzeit an deinen Dienst und Ehr'.

10. Nun ich kann nicht viel geben
in diesem armen Leben,
eins aber will ich tun.
Es soll dein Tod und Leiden,
bis Leib und Seele scheiden,
mir stets in meinem Herzen ruhn.

11. Ich wills vor Augen setzen,
mich stets daran ergetzen,
ich sei auch, wo ich sei.
Es soll mir sein ein Spiegel
der Unschuld und ein Siegel
der Lieb' und unverfälschten Treu'.

12. Wie heftig unsre Sünden
den frommen Gott entzündten,
wie Rach und Eifer gehn,
wie grausam seine Ruten,
wie zornig seine Fluten,
will ich aus deinem Leiden sehn.

13. From them shall I be learning
 How I may be adorning
 My heart with quietness
 And how I still should love them
 Whose malice aye doth move them
 To grieve me by their wickedness.

14. When evil men revile me,
 With wicked tongues defile me,
 I'll curb my vengeful heart.
 The unjust wrong I'll suffer,
 Unto my neighbor offer
 Forgiveness for each bitter smart.

15. I'll on the cross unite me
 To Thee, what doth delight me
 I'll there renounce for aye.
 Whate'er Thy Spirit's grieving,
 There I'll for aye by leaving
 As much as in my strength doth lay.

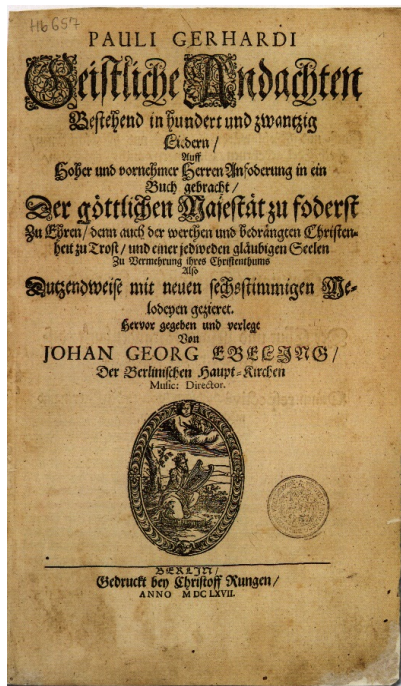
16. Thy groaning and Thy sighing,
 Thy bitter tears and dying,
 With which Thou wast oppressed,
 They shall, when life is ending,
 Be guiding and attending
 My way to Thine eternal rest.

13. Ich will daraus studieren,
 wie ich mein Herz soll zieren
 mit stillem, sanftem Mut,
 und wie ich die soll lieben,
 die mich doch sehr betrüben
 mit Werken, so die Bosheit tut.

14. Wenn böse Zungen stechen,
 mir Glimpf und Namen brechen,
 so will ich zähmen mich;
 das Unrecht will ich dulden,
 dem Nächsten seine Schulden
 verzeihen gern und williglich.

15. Ich will mich mit dir schlagen
 ans Kreuz und dem absagen,
 was meinem Fleisch gelüst.
 Was deine Augen hassen,
 so viel mir immer möglich ist.

16. Dein Seufzen und dein Stöhnen
 und die veil tausend Tränen,
 die dir geflossen zu,
 die sollen mich am Ende
 in deinen Schoß und Hände
 begleiten zu der ewgen Ruh.



Ebeling's edition of Gerhardt's complete works



Stained glass image of Gerhardt in the sacristy of the Lübben church

EASTER HYMN

Auf, auf mein Herz mit Freuden (German 97) *Awake, My Heart with Gladness (TLH 192, LW 128)*

Joy is the trademark of Paul Gerhardt's hymnody. His hymns often speak of joy in the midst of the devastating experiences of every day life. But what could be more devastating than the death of our Savior? All of our hopes were pinned on Him who was crucified and laid in the tomb. Gerhardt writes, "The foe in triumph shouted when Christ lay in the tomb." (Verse 2) Our hope and faith seemed to be destroyed when Christ was in the tomb, but lo, the devil has been routed. His boast is turned to gloom. Christ has risen with a shout of victory! (Verse 2)

His victory has also become our victory. All the powers of hell have now been routed. Even death holds power over the Christian. The troubles of this world can trouble us no more. (Verses 3-5)

We Christians cleave to Christ, our Head. (Verse 7) The thought behind this verse comes from Ephesians 6:22, "God placed all things under [Christ's] feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him, who fills everything in every way." He defeats death, sin, pain, and all of hell's thrall. His victory belongs to those who are a part of Him through faith.

The last verse is a beautiful picture of the gates of heaven and the inscription in gold, "Who there My cross hath shared Finds here a crown prepared; Who there with Me hath died shall here be glorified." Gerhardt gives a beautiful explanation of Paul's words to Timothy, "If we died with Him, we will also live with Him." Our joy as Christians is great because our Savior who has died, has now been raised. Our joy will also be great when our Lord takes us from the sin and evil of this world into the glorious light of heaven. So, our hearts do awake with gladness because of the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ (Verse 1)

The German has 9 verses. *The Lutheran Hymnal* omits verse 3. *Lutheran Worship* omits verses 3,6,8

1. Awake, my heart with gladness,
See what today is done,
Now after gloom and sadness
Comes forth the glorious Sun!
My savior there was laid
where our bed must be made
when to the realms of light
Our spirit wings its flight.

2. The Foe in triumph shouted
When Christ lay in the tomb,
But, lo, he now is routed,
His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free;
In glorious victory
He who is strong to save
Has triumphed o'er the grave.

3. Upon the grave is standing
The Hero, looking round;
The Foe, no more withstanding,
His weapons on the ground
Throws down, his hellish power
To Christ he must give o'er
And to the Victor's bands
Must yield his feet and hands.

1. Auf, auf mein Herz, mit freuden,
nimm wahr, was heut geschicht!
Wie kömmt nach großen Leiden
nun ein so großes Licht!
Mein Heiland war gelegt
da, wo man uns hinträgt,
wenn von uns unser Geist
gen Himmel ist gereist.

2. Er war ins Grab gesenket,
der Feind trieb groß Geschrei.
Eh ers vermeint und denket,
ist Christus wieder frei
und ruft: Victoria!
schwingt fröhlich hier und da
sein Fähnlein als ein Held,
der Feld und Mut behält.

3. Der Held steht auf dem Grabe
und sieht sich munter um,
der Feind liegt und legt abe
Fist, Gall und Ungestüm;
er wirft zu Christi Fuß
sein Höllenreich und muß
selbst in des Siegers Band
ergeben Fuß und Hand.

4. This is a sight that gladdens;
What peace it doth impart!
Now nothing ever saddens
The joy within my heart;
No gloom shall ever shake,
No foe shall ever take,
The hope which God's own Son
In love for me hath won.

5. Now hell, its prince, the devil,
Of all their power are shorn;
Now I am safe from evil,
And sin I laugh to scorn.
Grim death with all his might
cannot my soul affright;
He is a powerless form,
Howe'er he rave and storm.

6. The world against me rageth,
Its fury I disdain;
Though bitter war it wageth,
Its work is all in vain.
My heart from care is free,
No trouble troubles me.
Misfortune ow is play,
And night is bright as day.

7. Now I will cling forever
To Christ, my Savior true;
My Lord will leave me never,
Whate'er He passes through.
He rends Death's iron chain,
He breaks through sin and pain,
He shatters hell's dark thrall.
I follow Him through all.

8. To halls of heavenly splendor
With Him I penetrate:
And trouble ne'er may hinder
Nor makes me hesitate.
Let tempest rage at will,
My Savior shields me still;
He grants abiding peace
and bids all tumult cease.

9. He brings me to the portal
That leads to bliss untold
Whereon this rime immortal
Is found in script of gold:
"Who there My cross hath shared
Finds here a crown prepared:
Who there with me has died
Shall here be glorified."

4. Das ist mir anzuschauen
ein rechtes Freudenspiel,
nun soll mir nicht mehr grauen
vor allem, was mir will
entnehmen meinen Mut
zusamt dem edlen Gut,
so mir durch Jesum Christ
aus Lieb erworben ist.

5. Die Höll und ihre Rotten
die krümmen mir kein Haar,
der Sünden kann ich spotten,
bleib allzeit ohn Gefahr;
der Tod mit seiner Macht
wird schlecht bei mir geacht,
er bleibt ein todtes bild,
und wär er noch so wild.

6. Die Welt ist mir ein Lachen
mit ihrem großen Zorn;
sie zürnt und kann nichts machen,
all Arbeit ist verlorn.
die Trübsal trübt mir nicht
mein Herz und Angesicht,
das Unglück ist mein Glück,
die Nacht mein Sonnenblick.

7. Ich hang und bleib auch hangen
an Christo als ein Glied;
wo mein Haupt durch ist gangen,
da nimmt er mich auch mit.
Er reißet durch den Tod,
durch Welt, durch Sünd und Not,
er reißet durch die Höll,
ich bin stets sein Gesell.

8. Er dringt zum Saal der Ehren,
ich folg ihm immer nach
und darf mich gar nicht kehren
an einzig Ungemach;
es tobe, was da kann,
mein Haupt nimmt sich mein an,
mein Heiland ist mein Schild,
der alles toben stillt.

9. Er bringt mich an die Pforten,
die in den Himmel führt,
daran mit güldnen Worten
der Reim gelesen wird:
Wer dort wird mit verhöhnt,
wird hier auch mit gekrönt;
wer dort mit sterben geht,
wird hier auch mit erhöht.

MARRIAGE HYMN

“Wie schön ist’s doch Herr Jesu Christ” (482) “O Jesus Christ, How Fair and Bright”⁵

On September 3, 1643 Pastor Joachim Fromm of the Marienkirche (St. Mary’s) in Berlin was married to Sabina Berthold. Sabina was the oldest daughter of Andreas Berthold, a Berlin attorney. Paul Gerhardt spent several years as a tutor in the Berthold home, and eventually he married the youngest daughter. The newlyweds received a guest book with greetings from many prominent people in Berlin, including the mayor and the pastors of the town. Among those greetings was a poem by a student of theology named Paul Gerhardt. He entitled his poem, “Trostgesang christliche Eheleute” (a hymn of comfort for a Christian Couple.)

Today marriage is often looked at as a partnership; however, this hymn shows that marriage is a God-given union. He blesses us with unity (vs 1), faithfulness (vs 2) and grace (vs 3). God fills marriage with his blessings (vs 4) and even uses it to extend His kingdom as parents bring up their children in the fear and training of the Lord. (vs 5) Marriage is not our invention. It is a blessed gift of God. (vs 6)

This hymn is, however, not “pie in the sky.” Gerhardt realizes that each marriage has its share of suffering and trials. (vs 7) The most difficult of these trials is when parents lose their children and eventually death separates the husband and wife. In 1651 Pastor Fromm had a hand in Paul Gerhardt’s first call to the city of Mittenwalde, which is just south of Berlin. Almost four years later on February 11, 1655 Gerhardt was united with the youngest Berthold daughter, Anna Maria. What a happy time for both of them! However, on January 14, 1657 their first daughter, Maria Elisabeth, died before she was a year old. In their grief, the Gerhardts hung a commemorative plaque, which still hangs in St. Mortitz Church to this day. Eventually, they would lose four of their five children. After Mittenwalde Gerhardt became pastor at the Nicolaikirche (St. Nicholas) in Berlin. His wife supported him when the prince removed him from his pulpit. Then in 1668 Anna Maria became sick. The best doctors in Berlin were called, but there was no hope. She received the Lord’s Supper for the last time. Her husband comforted her with his hymns. Her five year old son, Paul Friedrich, wept and begged her to stay. She comforted him with the hope of Christ’s heavenly garden. She died on March 5, 1668 and was buried behind the pulpit in the Nicolaikirche, from which her husband had been barred.⁶

Death cuts the bond that God makes in marriage. It seems to destroy the joy and blessedness, but like every Paul Gerhardt hymn, this one ends in heaven. The final verse prays for God’s guidance and deliverance in this life and looks forward to the everlasting life, that we will have with God and all of His people forever. The joy we will have there will far outweigh the grief that death brings. Nothing will ever be able to separate us from God and His people again.

The melody for this hymn is from ‘How Lovely Shines the Morning Star.’ The text for the Sunday in Epiphany, in which this hymn is sung, is the wedding in Cana. Gerhardt took a hymn that spoke of the love between Christ and His church and applied it to the love between husband and wife.

⁵The translation of this hymn is from the Ohio Synod hymnal.

⁶Jorg Erb, *Paul Gerhardt und seine Leider*, pages 63-64

1. O Jesus Christ, how bright and fair
The state of holy marriage, where
Thy blessing rich is given!
What gracious gifts Thou dost bestow,
What streams of bounty ever flow
Down from Thy holy heaven
When they |Obey
Thee, Lord, ever, |Leave Thee never,
Who, troth-plighted,
In one life have been united!

2 When man and wife are mated well,
in harmony together dwell
In chaste and faithful union,
Then grows their fortune with their love,
And angel visitants above
Rejoice at such communion;
No storm, | No worm
Can destroy that, | C an e'er gnaw that,
Which God giveth
To the pair that in Him liveth.

1. Wie schön ist's doch, Herr Jesu Christ,
Im Stande, da dein Segen ist,
Im Stande heil'ger Ehe!
Wie steigt und neigt sich deine Gab
Und alles Gut so mild herab
Aus deiner heil'gen Höhe,
Wann sich | An dich
Fleißig halten |Jung und Alten,
die im Orden
Eines Lebens einig worden.

2. Wenn Mann und Weib sich wohl begeh'n
Und unverrückt beisammen stehn
Im Bande reiner Treue,
Da geht das Glück in vollem Lauf,
Da sieht man, wie der Engel Hauf
Im Himmel selbst sich freue.
Kein Sturm, |Kein Wurm
Kann zerschlagen, | kann zernagen,
was Gott gibet
Dem Paar, das in ihm sich liebet.

3. Vor allen gibt er seine Gnad,
In derer Schoß er früh und spat
Sein Hochgeliebten heget.
Da spannt sein Arm sich täglich aus,
Da faßt er uns und unser Haus
Gleich als ein Vater pfeget.
Da muß | Ein Fuß
Nach dem andern | gehn und wandern,
bis sie kommen
In das Zelt und Sitz der Frommen.

4. Der Mann wird einem Baume gleich,
An Ästen schön, an Zweigen reich;
Das Weib gleich einem Reben,
Der seine Träublein trägt und nährt
Und sich je mehr und mehr vermehrt
Mit Früchten, die da leben.
Wohl dir, |O Zier,
Mannes Sonne, | Hauses Wonne,
Ehrenkrone!
Gott denkt dein bei seinem Throne.

6. Be of good cheer, it was not we
Who first this order did decree;
It was a higher Father,
Who loved and loveth us for aye,
And from whose lips, when grieved, each day
We friendly counsel gather;
Good end | He'll send
To our doing | and pursuing,
Wisely guiding
All our planning and providing.

7. A time will come, it cannot fail,
When we 'neath trials sore shall quail,
And tears be freely flowing;
To him who bears it patiently,
By God's grace shall his sorrow be
Turned into joy o'erflowing
Waive care, | Wait, bear;
He is near thee, | Who can cheer thee,
For thy sadness
He will give thee oil of gladness.

8. Come hither then, my King so blessed!
In trials guide, in pain give rest,
In anxious times relieving!
To Thee we shall ascribe the praise,
Our hearts and voices we shall raise
In one loud song, thanks giving,
Till we | With Thee
Shall be dwelling, | And there telling
Thy praise ever,
Nevermore from Thee to sever.

5. Dich, dich hat er sich aerkorn,
Daß aus dir ward herausgeborn
Das Volk, das sein Reich bauet.
Sein Wunderwerk geht immer fort,
Und seines Mundes starkes Wort
Macht, daß dein Auge schauet
Schöne | Söhne
Und die Tocken, | die den Wocken
abespinnen
Und mit Kunst die Zeit gewinnen.

6. Sei gutes Muts! Wir sind es nicht,
Die diesen Orden aufgericht',
Es ist ein höh'rer Vater,
Der hat uns je und je geliebt
Und bleibt, wenn unsre Sorg uns trübt,
Der beste Freund und Rater.
Anfang. | Ausgang
Aller Sachen, | die zu machen,
wir gedenken,
Wird er wohl und weislich lenken.

7. Zwar bleibt's nicht aus, es kommt ja wohl
Ein Stündlein, da man Leides voll
Die Tränen lässet schießen;
Jedennoch wer sich in Geduld
Ergibt, des Leid wird Gottes Huld
In großen Freuden schließen.
Sitze, | Schwitze
Nur ein wenig; unser König
wird behende
Machen, daß die Angst sich wende.

8. Wohl her, mein König, nah herzu!
Gib Rat in Kreuz, in Nöten Ruh,
In Ängsten Trost und Freude.
Des sollst du haben Ruhm und Preis,
Wir wollen singen bester Weis
Und danken alle beide,
Bis wir | Bei dir,
Deinen Willen | zu erfüllen,
deinen Namen
Ewig loben werden. Amen.

SUMMER HYMN

"Geh Aus Mein Herz und suche Freud!"

"Go Forth My Heart and Seek Delight!"

It's overwhelming, just how marvellous God created the world and everything in it. Eventually creation points us to *Him*, who made it all. Even when the poison of sin sometimes makes it hard to see God's goodness and the goodness of creation, God's signature is still there, and we can't help but rejoice in the goodness and power of Him whom made it all.

Paul Gerhardt lived in a world, whose language and life were completely influenced by the Bible. His summer hymn wasn't inspired by a new experience with nature. His image of nature is completely influenced by Scripture. So much so, that besides the lark and the nightingale, every animal in this hymn are mentioned in the Bible.

The joyful character of this summer song is based on a section of the Song of Solomon,

"See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come;

the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

The fig tree forms its early fruit;

the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. (Song of Solomon 2:11-13)

Gerhardt's summer song is divided into two sections. The first praises the Creator for all of His goodness to us in this beautiful world. That section comes to the climax in 8, "Ich selber kann..." (Thy mighty working...) But the beauty of creation only makes us yearn for the eternal pleasures of Heaven, "where no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor. 2:9) If God has blessed us so much on this earth, what even greater blessings await us in His eternal glory! Verses 9-14 sing then of the joys of heaven.

The hymn was written during His ministry at Mittenwalde. It has been set to a number of melodies, the most beloved is from August Harder in 1813. That melody made the hymn into a German Folk Song. Sadly, that also closed the church doors to the hymn. Since that time it has not been included in many hymnals because of the peppy tune and the secular popularity of the first stanzas. It's hoped that people will come to appreciate this hymn again as a beautiful poem of thanksgiving for God's goodness in the gift of the delights of summer and of anticipation of the joys of Paradise.

1. Go forth, my heart and seek delight
In all the gifts of God's great might,
These pleasant summer hours:
Look how the plains for thee and me
Have deck'd themselves most fair to see,
All bright and sweet with flowers.

2. The trees stand thick and dark with leaves,
And earth o'er all her dust now weaves
A robe of living green;
Nor silks of Solomon compare
With glories that the tulips wear,
Or lilies' spotless sheen.

1. Geh aus mein Herz, und suche Freud
in dieser lieben Sommerzeit
an deines Gottes Gaben;
schau an der schönen Garten Zier
und siehe, wie sie mir und dir
sich ausgeschmücket haben.

2. Die Bäume stehen voller Laub,
das Erdreich decket seinen Staub
mit einem grünen Kleide;
Narzissus und die Tulipan,
die ziehen sich viel schöner an
als Solomonis Seide.

⁷Catherine Winkworth, *Lyra Germanica*, 1859

3. The lark soars singing into space,
The dove forsakes her hiding place,
And coos the woods among;
The richly-gifted nightingale,
Pours forth her voice o'er hill and dale,
And floods the fields with song.

4. Here with her brood the hen doth walk,
There builds and guards his nest the stork,
The fleet-wing'd swallows pass;
The swift stag leaves his rocky home,
And down the light deer bounding come
To taste the long rich grass.

5. The brooks rush gurgling through the sand,
And from the trees on either hand,
Cool shadows o'er them fall;
The meadows at their side are glad
With herd; and hark! the shepherd lad
Sends forth his mirthful call.

6. And humming, hovering to and fro,
The never-wearied swarms now go
To seek their honey'd food;
And through the vine's yet feeble shoots
Stream daily upwards from her roots
New strength and juices good.

7. The corn springs up, a wealth untold,
A sight to gladden young and old,
Who now their voices lift
To Him who gives such plenteous store,
And makes the cup of life run o'er
With many a noble gift.

8. Thy mighty working, mighty God,
Wakes all my powers; I look abroad
And can no longer rest:
I too must sing when all things sing,
And from my heart the praises ring
The Highest loveth best.

9. I think, art Thou so good to us,
And scatterest joy and beauty thus
O'er this poor earth of ours;
What nobler glories shall be given
Hereafter in Thy shining heaven,
Set round with golden towers!

3. Die Lerche schwingt sich in die Luft,
das Täublein fliegt aus seiner Kluff
und macht sich in die Wälder;
die hochbegabte Nachtigall
ergötzt und füllt mit ihrem Schall
Berg, Hügel, Tal und Felder.

4. Die Glucke führt ihr Vöcklein aus,
der Storch baut und bewohnt sein Haus,
das Schwäblein speist die Jungen,
der schnelle Hirsch, das leichte Reh
ist froh und kommt aus seiner Höh
ins tiefe Gras gesprungen.

5. Die Bächlein rauschen in dem Sand
und malen sich an ihrem Rand
mit schattenreichen Myrten;
die Wiesen liegen hart dabei
und klingen ganz vom Lustgeschrei
der Schaf und ihrer Hirten.

6. Die unverdroßne Bienenschar
fliegt hin und her,
sucht hier und da ihr edle Honigspeise;
des süßen Weinstockes starker Saft
bringt täglich neue Stärk und Kraft
in seinem schwachen Reise.

7. Der Weizen wächst mit Gewalt;
darüber jauchzet jung und alt
und rühmt die große Güte
des, der so überflüssig labt,
und mit so manchem Gut begabt
das menschliche Gemüte.

8. Ich selber kann und mag nicht ruhn,
des großen Gottes großes Tun
erweckt mir alle Sinnen;
ich singe mit, wenn alles singt,
und lasse, was dem Höchsten klingt,
aus meinem Herzen rinnen.

9. Ach, denk ich, bist du hier so schön
und läßt du's uns so lieblich gehn
auf dieser armen Erden:
was will doch wohl nach dieser Welt
dort in dem reichen Himmelszelt
und güldnen Schlosse werden.

10. What thrilling joy when on our sight
Christ's garden beams in cloudless light,
Where all the air is sweet,
Still laden with the unwearied hymn
From all the thousand seraphim
Who God's high praise repeat!

11. Oh were I there! Oh that I now,
Dear God, before Thy throne could bow,
And bear my heavenly palm!
Then like the angels would I raise
My voice, and sing Thy endless praise
In many a sweet-toned psalm.

12. Nor can I now, O God, forbear,
Though still this mortal yoke I wear,
To utter oft Thy name;
But still my heart is bent to speak
Thy praises; still, though poor and weak,
Would I Thy love proclaim.

13. But help me; let Thy heavenly showers
Revive and bless my fainting powers,
And let me thrive and grow
Beneath the summer of Thy grace,
And fruits of faith bud forth apace
While yet I dwell below.

15. And set me, Lord, in Paradise
When I have bloom'd beneath these skies
Till my last leaf is flown;
Thus let me serve Thee here in time,
And after, in that happier clime,
And Thee, my God, alone!

10. Welch hohe Lust, welch heller Schein
wird wohl in Christi Garten sein!
Wie muß es da wohl klingen,
das so viel tausend Saraphim
mit unverdroßnem Mund und Stimm
ihr Halleluja singen.

11. O wär ich da! O stünd ich schon,
ach süßer Gott, vor deinem Thron
und trüge meine Palmen:
so wollt ich nach der Engel Weis'
erhöhen deines Namen Preis
mit tausend schönen Psalmen.

12. Doch gleichwohl will ich, weil ich noch
hier trage dieses Leibes Joch,
auch nicht gar stille schweigen;
mein Herze soll sich fort und fort
an diesem und an allem Ort
zu deinem Lobe neigen.

13. Hilf mir und segne meinen Geist
mit Segen, der vom Himmel fleußt,
daß ich dir stetig blühe;
gib, daß der Sommer deiner Gnad
in meiner Seele früh und spat
viel Glaubensfrüchte ziehe.

14. Mach in mir deinem Geiste Raum,
daß ich dir werd ein guter Baum,
und laß mich Wurzel treiben.
Verleihe, daß zu deinem Ruhm
ich deines Gartens schöne Blum
und Pflanze möge bleiben.

15. Erwähle mich zum Paradies
und laß mich bis zur letzten Reis'
an Leib und Seele grünen,
so will ich dir und deiner Ehr
allein und sonstem keinem mehr
hier und dort ewig dienen.



stained glass in Mittenwalde

Evening Hymn

“Nun Ruhen alle Wälder” (319) **“Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow” (TLH 554)**

This is one of Paul Gerhard’t most endearing hymns. The eighth verse has been learned by millions of children throughout the centuries as an evening prayer. The first seven verses are each divided into two parts. The first part of each verse describes the approaching evening: the day’s work is past, the sun sets, the stars appear, clothing and shoes are taken off, the body is thankful for the evening peace, and finally it lies down to sleep. The second part of each of these verses finds a correlation to our faith. Verse 8 is a prayer for Jesus protection, and verse 9 assures our loves ones of God’s protection now and forever.

1. Now rest beneath night's shadow
The woodland, field, and meadow,
The world in slumber lies;
But Thou, my heart, awake thee,
To prayer and song betake thee;
Let praise to thy Creator rise.

2. The radiant sun hath vanished,
His golden rays are banished
By night, the foe of day;
But Christ, the Sun of gladness,
Dispelling all my sadness,
Within my heart holds constant sway.

3. The rule of day is over
And shining jewels cover
The heaven's boundless blue.
Thus I shall shine in heaven,
Where crowns of gold are given
To all who faithful prove and true.

4. To rest my body hasteth,
Aside its garments casteth,
Types of mortality;
These I put off and ponder
How Christ will give me yonder
A robe of glorious majesty.

1. Nun ruhen alle Wälder,
Vieh, Menschen, Städt' und Felder,
Es schläft die ganze Welt;
Ihr aber, meine Sinnen,
Auf, auf, ihr sollt beginnen,
Was eurem Schöpfer wohlgefällt!

2. Wo bist du, Sonne, blieben?
Die Nacht hat dich vertrieben,
Die Nacht, des Tages Feind.
Fahr hin! Ein' andre Sonne,
Mein Jesus, meine Wonne,
Gar hell in meinem Herzen scheint.

3. Der Tag ist nun vergangen,
Die güldnen Sternlein prangen
Am blauen Himmelssaal;
So, so werd' ich auch stehen,
Wenn mich wird heißen gehen
Mein Gott aus diesem Jammertal.

4. Der Leib eilt nun zur Ruhe,
Legt ab das Kleid und Schuhe,
Das Bild der Sterblichkeit;
Die zieh' ich aus, dagegen
Wird Christus mir anlegen
Den Rock der Ehr' und Herrlichkeit.

5. Das Haupt, die Füß und Hände
Sind froh, daß nun zum Ende
Die Arbeit kommen sei.
Herz, freu dich, du sollst werden
Vom Elend dieser Erden
Und von der Sündenarbeit frei.

6. Nun geht, ihr matten Glieder,
Geht hin, und legt euch nieder,
Der Betten ihr begehrt.
Es kommen Stund und Zeiten,
Da man euch wird hereiten
Zur Ruh ein Bettlein in der Erd.

7. Mein Augen stehn verdrossen,
Im hui sind sie geschlossen,
Wo bleibt denn Leib und Seel?
Nimm sie zu deinen Gnaden,
Sei gut für allen Schaden,
Du Aug und Wächter Israel.

8. Lord Jesus, who dost love me,
Oh, spread Thy wings above me
And shield me from alarm!
Though evil would assail me,
Thy mercy will not fail me:
I rest in Thy protecting arm.

9. My loved ones, rest securely,
For God this night will surely
From peril guard your heads.
Sweet slumbers may He send you
And bid His hosts attend you
And through the night watch o'er your beds.

8. Breit aus die Flügel beide,
O Jesu, meine Freude,
Und nimm dein Küchlein ein!
Will Satan mich verschlingen,
So laß die Englein singen:
Dies Kind soll unverletzet sein!

9. Auch euch, ihr meine Lieben,
Soll heute nicht betrüben
Kein Unfall noch Gefahr.
Gott laß' euch ruhig schlafen,
Stell' euch die güldnen Waffen
Ums Bett und seiner Helden Schar.



Gräfenhainichen



Paul Gerhardt's Testament to His Son Paul Friedrich Spring 1676

Now that I have reached the seventieth year of my life, I have the blessed hope that my dear God will soon deliver me from this world and lead me to a better life than I have had up to now on this earth. I thank Him first of all for all of His goodness and faithfulness, which He has shown to me in body and soul since I was in my mother's womb until this very hour. In addition I ask Him from my the bottom of my heart that He will give me a cheerful departure and take my soul into His fatherly hands and give my body peaceful rest in the earth until Judgement Day, from where He will raise all those before me and after me, and I will see my dear Lord Jesus face to face, in whom I have believed but have not yet seen. I leave my only remaining son few earthly goods, although among them an honest name of which he need not be ashamed.

My son knows that since his childhood I have given him to the Lord my God that he would be a servant and preacher of His holy Word. He should remain with that and not turn from it, even though it will give him few good days, however the dear Lord gives counsel and can exchange the outward troubles with plenty of inner content and joy of the Spirit.

Study theology in a pure schools and orthodox universities. Beware of the Synretists (those who had mixed various confessions, especially Lutheran and Reformed), because they are interested only in the present and are faithful to neither God nor man. In your social life, don't follow any bad company, but the will and commands of your God. Especially take note of the following: 1. Don't do anything bad in the hope that it will stay hidden, for nothing is spun so small that it doesn't come into the light of the sun. 2. Outside of your office and calling, do not become enraged. If you feel that your anger is starting to boil, stay silent and don't say a word until you have prayed the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed to yourself. 3. Shame yourself in the lusts of the flesh, and when you reach the age to wed, marry with God and good counsel among pious, faithful, and sensible people. 4. Do good to all people, even if they don't reward you for it right away, for what isn't rewarded by man, the Maker of heaven and earth has long since rewarded, in that He made you, sent His own dear Son for you, and received you as His child and heir in Holy Baptism. 5. Flee from greed as from hell itself. Be content with what you acquire honorably and with a good conscience, even if it is not all that much. If God should bless you with an abundance, ask Him that He will preserve you from a gross misuse of your earthly goods.

In summary: pray continually, study something honorable, live in peace, work diligently and honestly, and remain steadfast in your faith and confession, so shall you also one day die and leave this world willingly, cheerfully, and blessedly. Amen.

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Translations

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My Favorite Paul Gerhardt Cd's

Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund - 18 Choräle von Paul Gerhardt,

Gast auf Erden - Paul Gerhardt neu entdeckt; *Geistesgegenwart*, Sarah Kaiser

