

Faith of Our Fathers

Faith of our fathers! living still
 In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:
 O how our hearts beat high with joy
 When-e'er we hear that glorious word!

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
 Were still in heart and conscience free:
 How sweet would be their children's fate,
 If they, like them, could die for thee!

Faith of our fathers! we will strive
 To win all nations unto thee,
 And through the truth that comes from God,
 Mankind shall then be truly free.

Faith of our fathers! we will love
 Both friend and foe in all our strife:
 And preach thee, too, as love knows how,
 By kindly words and virtuous life.

- I. History of the Song
 - A. This song was written in 1849 by Frederick William Faber (1814 – 1863).
 - B. Faber was raised by Anglican parents who were strict Calvinists.
 - C. He was ordained in the Church of England in 1839 after graduating from Oxford.
 1. He wrote several books, some of which sought to defend the Church of England.
 2. He also published several works of poetry.
 - D. While at Oxford, Faber was influenced strongly by John Henry Newman, a devout Catholic.
 - E. On November 16, 1845 – a Sunday evening – Faber announced to his Anglican congregation that he was leaving the Church of England and seeking ordination as a Roman Catholic.
 - F. Faber desired to bring to the Catholics the same kind of music that he had learned and enjoyed as a Protestant.
 - G. Thus, following the style of the Wesley brothers, he began to write hymns.
 - H. “Faith of Our Fathers” was written to remind Catholics of the suffering endured by their ancestors during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.
 1. It is true that when Protestants ruled, Catholics suffered dearly.
 2. However, it is also true that when Catholics ruled, Protestants suffered just as badly.

- I. Because of this, the lyrics of the song have been changed numerous times since it was written.
 1. Some have changed the lyrics to "Faith of the martyrs."
 2. In Faber's original hymn, the third verse stated: "Faith of our fathers! Mary's prayers / Shall win our country back to thee."
 3. In 1853, the Unitarians changed the words to: "Faith of our fathers! Good men's prayers / Shall win our country all to thee."
 4. Still other versions say: "Faith of our fathers! faith and prayer / Shall win all nations unto thee."
 5. More modern versions read as above: "Faith of our fathers! we will strive / To win all nations unto thee."
 6. Many versions of the song omit the third verse completely.
 7. In 1994, a fifth verse was added by Mike Hay: "Our mothers, too, oppressed and wronged, / Still lived their faith with dignity; / Their brave example gives us strength / To work for justice ceaselessly."
- J. Indeed, this song has had an interesting history.

II. Heritage of the Truth

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

- A. The refrain speaks of being true to the faith of one's fathers until death.
- B. But, to which "faith" should one be true – Anglican? Calvinist? Protestant? Catholic?
- C. Paul declared that Christians should "hold the traditions" that come from the Word of God (Titus 2:13-15).
- D. To follow anything else is to "believe a lie" (Titus 2:10-12; cf. John 4:20).
- E. The only faith that can save is one that comes from hearing the Word of God and obeying only the Scripture (Romans 10:17; 6:17-18).

III. Heroes of the Faith (Hebrews 11)

- A. While the Christian may look to the examples of the faithful throughout the ages, he is best served by considering his true spiritual fathers (Hebrews 13:7; Galatians 3:26-29).
- B. This is the purpose of Faith's Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11.
 1. Abel
 2. Enoch
 3. Noah
 4. Abraham & Sarah
 5. Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph
 6. Moses
 7. Those "of whom the world was not worthy"
- C. Ultimately, the Christian must always look to Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3).
- D. It is to this faith that one must be true unto death (Revelation 2:10).