



If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

Text: Georg Neumark (1621-1681)

Tune: Georg Neumark (1621-1681)

As we endure the changes and chances of this life, we need God as our constant source of guidance and protection. Without Him as our Ruler and Guide, we will surely fall into despair. Though we may not understand why we experience the hardships we do, we know that God is in control through them all and He is guiding us. This Theology of the Cross is our greatest comfort. Our God is with us in everything, no matter how dark the road.



Georg Neumark

Georg Neumark was born on March 16, 1621, the son of Michael Neumark, a clothier in Langensalza, Thuringia. He began his education at the gymnasia (honors high school) of Schleusingen and Gotha. Following this time in school he became a family tutor. He made plans to attend the University of Königsberg in 1641, and while travelling there, just outside the city of

Magdeburg, he was robbed of all his possessions and savings except his prayer book and a small amount of money he had sewn to his clothes. This new situation of absolute poverty made university attendance impossible. He remained in Magdeburg, but was unable to find employment. After attempting to secure employment in several other cities, he eventually arrived in Kiel, where he was befriended by the Rev. Nicolaus Becker, who was originally from Neumark's homeland of Thuringia. After waiting several months for employment there, he was taken in by the family of Judge Stephan Henning to be the tutor of the judge's children. By 1643 he had saved enough money to again go to the University of Königsberg. He stayed for five years, studying law and poetry. However, in 1648 he again lost all he had, this time losing everything in a fire.

Neumark held several positions following the devastating fire, and by 1651 returned to Thuringia. When there, he made his presence known to Duke Wilhelm II of Saxe-Weimar. The Duke (who wrote "Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now") was the leader of the Fruitbearing Society, the foremost German literary union of the 17th century. In 1652 the Duke appointed Neumark court poet, librarian, and registrar of the administration at Weimar. In September 1653 he was admitted to the Fruitbearing Society, and in 1656 was made its secretary. By 1681, he had lost his eyesight, and eventually died July 18, 1681.

When Neumark wrote "If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee" at age 19 in Kiel, he was recovering from the crushing robbery on his way to the University. However, his saving employment by Judge Henning is what gave him occasion to write this excellent hymn on God's guidance. In his last written work, Neumark talked about this hymn, saying: "This good fortune, which came so suddenly and, as it were, from heaven, gladdened my heart so that I, on the first day, to the glory of my God, composed the well-known hymn, 'If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee,' for I had ample reason to thank God heartily for this unexpected grace, both then and to the end." He originally entitled this hymn, "A Hymn of Consolation. That God will car for, and preserve, His own in His own time, after the saying, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee' (Ps. 55:22)."

This most excellent hymn on trust can be divided into two sections. The first discusses how trust manifests itself. First it appears in the joyous certainty of God's unchanging love (st. 1). It is also present in refraining from needless cares and complaints (st. 2). Finally, this trust resigns itself to the will of God (st. 3). The second half of the hymn discusses the foundation of this trust which the Christian has. The comfort that God knows our every need (st. 3) because He "chose us for His own" is paramount. We trust in the will of God, that He will help in His own time when it is best for our faith (st. 4). But we have this trust because all our times are in His hand (st. 5-6). Therefore in Christian faith we sing and pray, going through our daily life knowing that God will never forsake His faithful child (st. 7).