



## O God, Forsake Me Not

**Text: Salomo Franck (1659-1725)**

**Tune: Johann Balthasar König (1691-1758)**

As we approach the Last Day, we need God's help and protection even more. We pray that God not forsake us and that He give us His Holy Spirit to guard and protect us. Without His aid, we would surely fall away from the faith and deserve eternal death. So our hymns are truly prayers that God would keep us faithful until the end, that He would never forsake us, and that He would grant us a blessed death and joyful homecoming in heaven.

This was a common theme of the hymns of Salomo Franck. He was the son of Jakob Franck, the financial secretary at Weimar. He was born there March 6, 1659. Little is known of his early life. He likely studied at the University of Jena, and afterwards held an appointment at Zwickau. In 1689 he became secretary of the administration at Arnstadt for the Duke of Schwarzburg. By 1697 he oversaw the Saxon administration and church offices of Jena. In 1702 he was appointed secretary of the consistory, librarian, and curator of the Duke's collection of coins and medals at Weimar. He died in Weimar on July 11, 1725.

During his life, he was the author of a considerable number of secular poems which were written for various occasions. The majority of these poems are lost. However, he was a diligent worker and a man of great piety and Christian devotion. He bore many afflictions in his family's life, and because of that an undercurrent of death is noticeable in many of his hymns. As a hymnwriter, he is known for his style and popularity of topics in church life. He almost always used a refrain in his hymns. His word painting is also exceptional, often employing a compare and contrast type of style in his images.

However, Salomo Franck is likely best known for his collaboration with Johann Sebastian Bach. The two began working together in Weimar in 1714. Of Bach's cantatas written in Weimar (about thirty in number), Franck wrote the text for all but two of them. Even when Bach moved to Leipzig in 1723, he continued to work with texts that Franck had given him, either enlarging them or writing entirely new works. Franck's gift for combining poetry with the Words of Scripture earned him great admiration in Bach's eyes.



J.S. Bach

For this hymn's translation into English, we have August Crull to thank. Crull (1842-1923) was born in Germany, but came to America to study for the ministry, earning degrees from Concordia College in Fort Wayne, Indiana and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. After his seminary graduation he became pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From 1873-1915 he taught German and literature at Concordia College in Fort Wayne. He is the one who started the process of translating German Lutheran hymns into English. His publication of an English language hymnal for the Norwegian Synod at Decorah, Iowa in 1877 was the first major orthodox Lutheran hymnal in English. Before that, many of the English Lutheran hymnals took their hymns from almost entirely non-Lutheran sources.

"O God, Forsake Me Not" is the Christian's prayer that he lead a faithful life, despite the devil's and the world's temptation. The Christian, the "helpless child" cannot survive except for the Holy Spirit (st. 1). Without Him, our faith would be feeble and sin would overcome us (st. 2). Because the prince of hell seeks to attack our conscience, we pray constantly, especially in the hour of temptation (st. 3). In these times we pray that we would do what is pleasing to God, and that He would grant us His blessing to do so (st. 4). But chiefly our prayer is that we be sustained unto life everlasting. We pray that we would never leave the Lord, and that He would grant us a blessed end (st. 5). In life and in death, "O God, forsake me not!"