

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

“How Firm a Foundation” is a hymn that for over two centuries has assured believers of the faithfulness of Christ and the certainty of hope. The first verse, based on I Corinthians 3:11, acts as an introduction to the rest of the text, giving us cause to stop and ponder the Word of assurance that God has given us, described in greater detail in the next four verses. Those four verses are paraphrases of Scripture passages: Isaiah 41:10, 43:2, Romans 8:3-39, Hebrews 13:5, and Deuteronomy 31:6. In the words of this hymn then, we carry with us the Word from God, and the call to trust in that Word. But God’s Word is expansive and not limited to letters on a page - the fifth verse moves us to a trust in the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. Thus we are assured by the words we sing, the Word we are given, and the Word made flesh, of the steadfastness of God and His unfailing love.

Scripture References:

st. 1 = 1 Cor. 3:11 st. 2 = Isa. 41:10 st. 3-4 = Isa. 43:2
st. 5 = Rom. 8:35-39, Deut. 31:6

1 How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

2 “Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed,
for I am your God, and will still give you aid.
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

3 “When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you the deepest distress.

4 “When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply.
The flames shall not hurt you. I only design
your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

5 “The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!”