

## **Nearer My God To Thee Genesis 28:10-22**

### **Hymns Have Meaning**

Have you ever 'found' something that you did not even know was lost?

Have you ever started using something and realized you really needed it a long time ago just as much as you need it today?

Like the Psalms of old, most of our hymns have a story or purpose behind them. Sometimes we sing songs without ever knowing what prompted the writer. While not necessarily wrong, it does mean we may not get the full impact of a hymn. I have sung this song many years with a vague association to Jesus in my thoughts because of a couple of lines - 'E'en though it be a cross' & 'My rest a stone'

Recently learned a little background and some 'extra' verses that help see a different focus. Our book uses **Psalm 73:28** for a reference.

The text was written by Sarah Flower Adams (1805-1848). The local minister asked Sarah and her older sister Eliza, who was musically talented, to produce a new hymn on the story of Jacob and Esau for the book to accompany a sermon that he was planning to preach on the subject. In preparation, Sarah began reading the Bible account very carefully. But about that same time, Eliza contracted tuberculosis. Thus, in 1840, Sarah wrote her most famous hymn not only to be used in the hymnbook but also to comfort her dying sister.

Hymn actually based on Jacob and the dream at Bethel - **Genesis 28:10-22**

It is certainly a hymn which can help us see the need to be near God, but with a better understanding of its story, we can see how it can be a song of comfort and encouragement as we get closer to our end here on earth. (Maybe that is why it was heard at the sinking of the Titanic.)

### **It Begins With A Universal Desire To Be Nearer To God.**

*Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee! E'en though it be a cross That raiseth me,  
Still all my song shall be, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*

God wants us to draw near - **James 4:8**

Cross and its focus should impress us with this desire - **Matthew 16:24**

This desire to be near should be expressed in our prayer and song to Him - **Psalms 28:7**

### **Second Verse Turns To The Story Of Jacob**

*Though like the wanderer, The sun gone down, Darkness be over me, My rest a stone;  
Yet in my dreams I'd be Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*

A wanderer fleeing the wrath of his brother, Jacob stopped to rest, placing a stone for his pillow, he spent the night in a dream - **1Peter 2:11**

We find no true rest here on earth - **Job 14:1**

We long to find a path to rest - **Hebrews 13:14; Hebrews 4:11**

### **Third Verse Looks To His Dream Of Entrance To The Presence Of God**

(Not in our book)

*There let the way appear, Steps unto heav'n, All that Thou sendest me In mercy giv'n,  
Angels to beckon me Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*

Are you starting to get the picture?

God has certainly provided way to Heaven - **John 14:6; Ephesians 2:17-18**

But also, helps us see that God is with us even now.

Here Jacob was away from his family, alone and in a strange land, but God shows him how close He really is each and every day. He was at the entrance to Heaven.

### **Fourth Verse Gives Attention To His Action Upon Waking**

(Also missing from our book)

*Then with my waking thoughts Bright with Thy praise, Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise,  
So by my woes to be Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*  
Awakened with joy and praise for God, he built an altar and worshipped the God who seemed so  
near to him. He was grateful that God saw fit to walk with him through life and we should be  
also. - **Psalms 5:1-3**

Like Jacob, even our troubles can draw us near to God - **James 1:2-4**

### **Verse Five Expresses An Expectation To Be Drawn To God At Death**

*Or if on joyful wing, Cleaving the sky, Sun, moon and stars forgot, Upward I fly,  
Still all my song shall be, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*  
When all this world is no longer our focus, we hope to be with the Father. Our entire life is to be  
focused on this one point, get to Heaven. Our hope is to "Fly Away" - **Luke 16:22;**  
**1Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1John 3:2**

### **Even More Found**

A sixth verse was written in 1876 by Edward H. Bickersteth Jr.

This verse is not in our books either but does work well as a closing for our lesson tonight.

*There in my Father's home, Safe and at rest, There in my Savior's love, Perfectly blest,  
Age after age to be Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*

Heaven is our desire. To be at home with God is our hope.

There we will forever be in His presence. Will you be there?

WayneSWalker/SteveWolfgang