

## WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

John 15:14-15 ... “You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends...”

You may be familiar with the old hymn reflected in today's devotional title. It was written in 1855 by Joseph Scriven, an Irishman, and was originally published anonymously. Mr. Scriven did not admit to writing it until shortly before he died, thirty years later. He did not want to claim credit or admiration for a text that was very personal to him. Instead of including the entire song here, let me share one of the verses:

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Encumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

It is obvious that Jesus became Mr. Scriven's dearest friend through the endless turmoils of his life. The evening before his wedding, his fiancé drowned. Sometime later, Mr. Scriven's second fiancé died shortly before they were to marry. He later wrote the song to comfort his dying mother in Ireland. The composer himself, later died of illness.

Do you feel weak today? Do the cares of this world and your family weigh heavy on your shoulders? Are you a tired care-giver to others? Have your friends disappeared because they do not want to be affected by your struggles? Are you feeling alone without anyone to comfort you? We often refer to Jesus as our friend, but many people struggle with that because they cannot physically see him with their eyes, touch him with their fingers, or feel real arms embracing their tired, lonely bodies. So, they continue to seek support from other people and when it is not found, they withdraw to the corners of their own minds to soak in their loneliness and depression. As long as you reject Jesus as your ultimate friend and, instead, seek answers in other friends, you will only find yourself falling deeper into depression.

Do not take my word for it. Joseph Scriven offers us his personal testimony of Jesus' friendship in this hymn. He experienced it himself and it saved him from the sadness of his experiences time and time again. Jesus wants to be your friend. He wants to be your comfort, your burden-bearer, and your refuge – the place where you go when life becomes unbearable. You need only say “Yes, I will accept Jesus as my best friend and, together, we will win against the attacks of satan, loneliness and pain.” The alternative is to find your own way, your own solutions to trouble, and comfort in things that may even hurt you.

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