

How Firm a Foundation

"**How Firm a Foundation**" is a Christian hymn, published in 1787 by John Rippon in *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors, Intended to be an Appendix to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns*, known as "Rippon's Selection". It is attributed only to "K", which probably refers to Robert Keen(e), precentor at Rippon's church,^[1] though other names suggested include Richard or John Keene, Kirkham, John Keith or Words by G. Keith and Music by J. Reading as cited in the 1884 publication of Asa Hull's *Jewels of Praise*.^[2] It is most often sung to the tune "Foundation" (or "Protection") which first appeared in *A Compilation of Genuine Church Music* (1832) edited by Joseph Funk, though the original tune may be Keen(e)'s "Geard".^[3]

How Firm a Foundation	
Genre	Hymn
Written	1787
Based on	1 Peter 1:23 Isaiah 41:10
Meter	11.11.11.11
Melody	"Foundation" by Joseph Funk

In 1835, the hymn was included in the first hymnbook introduced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although officially organized by the prophet Joseph Smith in 1830, his wife Emma Smith was charged early-on with collecting hymns for and establishing a hymnbook for the new church.^[4]

In addition, this was the favorite hymn of General Robert E. Lee and has been played at the funerals of several US politicians. On Christmas Eve 1898, American units involved in the Spanish–American War joined together to sing the hymn. The units were from the North and the South.

The hymn, along with "Jesus Loves Me," served as the thematic material for Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, which was later incorporated into his score for the 1938 documentary film *The River*. Sections of *The River's* score were reused in the 1983 television film *The Day After*.

Don Gillis interspersed the hymn tune throughout his Symphony No. 7 "Saga of a Prairie School", written in honor of his alma mater, Texas Christian University.

Lyrics

1: How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word
What more can He say than to you He hath said
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled

2: Fear not, I am with thee; oh be not dismayed
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand

3: When through the deep waters I call thee to go
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress

4: When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine

5: The soul that on Jesus has leaned 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. ^[5]

additional verses from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

2. In ev'ry condition—in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale or abounding in wealth,
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—
As thy days may demand, as thy days may demand,
As thy days may demand, so thy succor shall be.

6. E'en down to old age, all my people shall prove
My sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then, when gray hair shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs shall they still, like lambs shall they still,
Like lambs shall they still in my bosom be borne.

^[6] No mention is made of the additional verses' source or author.

References

1. "K. - Hymnary.org" (<http://www.hymnary.org/person/K>). Retrieved 19 September 2016.
2. "How Firm a Foundation" (<http://cyberhymnal.org/htm/h/f/hfirmafo.htm>). Retrieved 19 September 2016.
3. "How Firm a Foundation - HymnWiki" (http://www.hymnwiki.org/How_Firm_a_Foundation#Tunes). Retrieved 19 September 2016.
4. "How Firm a Foundation" (https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/how-firm-a-foundation?lang=eng&_r=1). *ChurchofJesusChrist.org*. Retrieved 2018-11-20.
5. <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/music/songs/how-firm-a-foundation/>
6. https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/how-firm-a-foundation?lang=eng&_r=1

External links

- [How Firm a Foundation \(http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/427.mp3\)](http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/427.mp3) (mp3 with organ only)

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