**HB 13.5** ~ *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

**DT 31.6** ~ *Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”*

**CONCLUSION**

We may never know anything more about **“K”**. It’s possible, even, that what we think we know is incorrect—perhaps he isn’t even Robert Keene, after all, but someone unknown! And there’s value in that. For as a result, the identity of the composer is subsumed into the message of the hymn.

**GL 2.20** ~ *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**INVITATION**

#475 [Tpcl-HYMN] **HYMN HISTORY #38 – How Firm a Foundation** HYMN

01/03/2023 PC \_\_ Pchd

**PURPOSE:** To teach the lesson in the hymn, “How Firm a Foundation”

**TRN TO 1CR 3**

**INTRODUCTION**

**ILL—Growing Up “Eric”** (very popular name growing up; there were three “Erics” in my homeroom class) That tends to happen sometimes. My work has an abundance of **“Chrises”**! When we hired the last one, we let him know he’d have to go by **“something”** other than just **“Chris”** or we’d all be confused. Honestly, we still are sometimes!

**ILL—Mononymous** (some celebrities are so famous, they’re known by only one name; examples: Drake, Usher, Cher, Madonna, and Bono) I’m not exactly sure how this happens—but over time, we all come to just recognize that person by the single name.

**If someone is famous when they’re known by only one name, what about someone who’s only known by one letter?**

**HYMN HERMENEUTICS**

In 1787, ***A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors*** was published by Dr. John Rippon. Contained within it, was tonight’s hymn: **“How Firm a Foundation”**. It’s authorship was attributed to **“K”**. Just “**K”**! For years, it was unknown who this author was. But later, it was determined that it was most likely written by Robert Keene—the song leader at Dr. Rippon’s church who also authored the melody of the hymn. He also appears to be the writer of **“In Songs of Sublime Adoration and Praise”** and **“The Bible is Justly Esteemed”**—songs I know I have never sung, personally.

That’s nearly all we know about this hymn and hymnist. We don’t know about his childhood. We don’t know what he did for a living outside of serving as the song leader. And yet, there is little doubt to its inspiration! This is one of the more **“Biblical”** hymns in our hymnal—each verse directly inspired by one or more verses of the Bible. Most believe that the hymn, itself, was likely inspired, in its entirety by **IS 43**.

**IS 43.1-5** ~ *But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.* ***2****When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.* ***3****For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.* ***4****Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.* ***5****Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.*

Tonight, I’d like for us to consider this hymn—and more importantly, the scripture that inspired it. For while we may not know much about the author, in a way, we can see much about him by the Scripture he highlighted and the words he composed!

**Vs 1: How Firm a Foundation! – 1CR 3.10-15**

**ILL—Because I Said So** (every parent has had that struggle; the endless “why”; it’s natural, though, as kids grow; they eventually begin to realize parents make mistakes—so why should they listen?) In truth, I make mistakes. I’m not always right! And so, I can sympathize with my kids wondering why they should listen to this idiot.

As Keene wrote these words, I expect he felt something similar. He knew that he didn’t know everything. He knew he didn’t always understand everything. But the great thing was that on that which mattered, he didn’t need to—for he had a God in whom he could trust!

*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,  
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?*

**AP:** We don’t sing **“a Capella”** because we like how it sounds. We don’t worship on the first day of the week because we don’t have anything else scheduled for the day. I don’t speak honestly because I’m not creative enough to lie. I do all these things, I preach what I preach, because of the foundation that God has laid for me.

**1CR 3.10-15** ~ *According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.****11****For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.****12****Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—****13****each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.****14****If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.****15****If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

**Vs 2: Fear Not, I am With Thee, O be Not Dismayed – IS 41.10**

**ILL—10,000 steps** (Erin and I were walking at night, and we were reflecting on how hard it is to get 10,000 steps anymore; it was easier before, I had more energy; now, I just don’t) It’s a terrifying moment when you realize just how limited you are. Just how limited your brain is—just how limited your strength is.

*Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;  
I’ll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand  
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.*

**AP:** Keene was like you and me. He experienced the pain of age and the pain of the gradual decay of human life. He understood just what we are incapable of doing. And that is so much more than we are willing to admin in our youth! But when the rich and powerful oppose us, when the might of government rises against righteousness, when we face ahead of us the mission of literally preaching to the entire world, we can trust the message of this verse and the Bible passage that inspires it:

**IS 41.10** ~ *fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

**Vs 3: The Soul That On Jesus Hath Leaned for Repose – RM 8.35-39**

**ILL—Windows Support** (Windows 7 no longer supported; what does that mean? You can keep it, but you’re open to things breaking and getting viruses and not getting any support) Seeing as you can’t open an email, message on Facebook, or even go to a website without getting exposed to an attack, that’s a frightening thing!

*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.*

**RM 8.35-39** ~ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?****36****As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”* ***37****No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.****38****For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,****39****nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I don’t know much about Keene, but from his writing of this passage, I realize that he understood the feeling of being under attack. And as we see some of the oldest institutions abandoning us (I can’t even get a Whopper anymore without recognizing it’s going to support a company that doesn’t share Biblical values), we can feel deserted. But we’ll never be deserted by God!