

The Call of Love and Duty

Some years ago, there was a shipwreck off the coast of the Pacific Northwest. A crowd of fishermen in a nearby village gathered to watch the ship as it was smashed on the rocks.

A lifeboat was sent to the rescue, and after a terrific struggle, the rescuers came back with all of the shipwrecked sailors but one. "There was no room in the lifeboat for him, so we told him to stay by the ship and someone would come back for him," shouted a young man.

"Who will come with me?" yelled another rescuer.

Just then, a little old lady cried out, "Don't go, Jim, my boy. Don't go. You are all I have left. Your father was drowned in the sea. Your brother, William, sailed away and we've never heard from him; and now, if you are lost, I'll be left alone. Oh, Jim, please don't go."

Jim listened patiently to his mother's pleading, then said, "Mother, I must go! It is my duty. I must go!"

The onlookers watched as the men in the lifeboat fought their way toward the wreck. Anxiously, Jim's mother wept and prayed. They saw the boat start back toward the shore, being tossed about by the angry waves like a little shell. At last, it came close enough to hear, and the spectators shouted, "Did you get him?"

And Jim shouted back, "Yes, and tell Mother it is William!"

What an incredible story! It is proof, indeed, that *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*, which is a Christian hymn written in 1773 by William Cowper from England. Its message is as important to us today as it was at the time of Cowper's composition. Here are the lyrics:

God moves in a mysterious way ... His wonders to perform ... He plants His footsteps in the sea ... And rides upon the storm ... Deep in unfathomable mines ... Of never failing skill ... He treasures up His bright designs ... And works His sovereign will ... Ye fearful saints fresh courage take ... The clouds ye so much dread ... Are big with mercy, and shall break ... In blessings on your head ... Judge not the Lord by feeble sense ... But trust Him for His grace ... Behind a frowning providence ... He hides a smiling face ... His purposes will ripen fast ... Unfolding ev'ry hour ... The bud may have a bitter taste ... But sweet will be the flow'r.

As this hymn suggests, we must trust in God's greater wisdom in the face of trouble or inexplicable events. Perhaps you today face some fearful circumstance, and this encouragement was meant for you.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere (James 3:17 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter