

How Firm a Foundation

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. Isaiah 41:10

1. How firm a foun - da - tion, you saints of the Lord,
2. "Fear not, I am with you, O be not dis - mayed,
3. "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way shall lie,
4. "The soul that on Je - sus has leaned for re - pose

is laid for your faith in His ex - cel - lent Word!
for I am your God— I will still give you aid.
My grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply;
I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;

What more can He say than to you He has said,
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
the flame shall not hurt you, I on - ly de - sign
that soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,

to you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
up - held by My right - eous, om - ni - po - tent hand."
your dross to con - sume, and your gold to re - fine."
I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er for - sake!"

TEXT: "K" in John Rippon's *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787, alt.
MUSIC: American folk tune, Funk's *Genuine Church Music*, 1832

FOUNDATION
11.11.11.11

How Firm a Foundation truly lives up to its name, as the entire hymn focuses on God's trustworthy promises found in his sufficient word.

Leland Ryken says in his excellent volume, *40 Hymns for the Christian Life*, "Once the opening pair of lines has asserted that premise, the entire rest of the poem is an elaboration of it." The poem specifically elaborates on the various ways God promises to remain faithful to his people, drawing from passages across both the Old and New Testaments.

Most songs for corporate worship are either written *to* God or *about* God, but this hymn is remarkably unique. Though the first verse declares a truth *about* God's word, each subsequent verse is sung as if *God himself sings it*. In this way, the singer hears God's own word declaring his promises, which is the very point of the hymn's title and theme!

Each of the verses asserts promises that aim to comfort a church in distress. God's people are dismayed, weak, alone, downtrodden, in pain, and facing trial by fire. But in the midst of this trouble, God promises to help, provide, protect, refine, and redeem. In this way, not only are we reminded *that* God's word is sufficient, but *how* it is sufficient to bring us sure hope in Christ even in the most difficult circumstances.

The lyrics were first published in 1787 by John Rippon, just a few years into his 63-year pastorate at Carter's Lane Baptist Church in England. He recorded the hymn under the appropriate title, "Exceedingly Great and Precious Promises," and attributed it to an author only known by the letter 'K.' It seems poetic, then, that though we aren't quite sure who penned the lyrics, we can be certain of God's sufficient word and precious promises.

Scripture to consider:

Deuteronomy 31:6	Isaiah 41:10	1 Peter 4:12-13
Proverbs 30:5-6	Isaiah 43:2	Hebrews 13:5
Isaiah 40:6-8	2 Corinthians 12:9	