

When I Don't Know the Answer

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet sources)

Introduction:

A. "Farther Along"

1. The lyrics to the song were written in 1911 by W. A. Fletcher, an itinerant preacher, while he was traveling to the Indian Territories by train. Fletcher was feeling depressed because his wife, Catherine Louise Emmett back in Cleburne, Texas was expecting their first-born child in a few weeks and he wouldn't be present for the occasion. He felt that his priorities were with his ministry in the Indian Territories and wrote the lyrics to reflect his frame of mind at the time. Sitting next to him on the train was J. R. Baxter, a gospel music publisher who was quite taken with the lyrics that Fletcher was writing and offered him \$2.00 for them. Mr. Baxter subsequently had them put to music and the song has been quite popular ever since. Since then, at least four different men have been credited with writing this song.

2. The song deals with a Christian's discouragement at the apparent prosperity of the wicked in contrast to the suffering of the righteous.

3. Psalm 73:12-16, 21-24; 1John 3:1-3

B. Faithful Christians want to know about heaven.

1. What will it be like? What will we do? How will we exist?

2. John admits he doesn't know what we will be like. He does say that we will be like the Lord. For John, that is enough.

3. Farther along, we will understand more about:

I. MYSTERIES OF LIFE

A. Some things are unknown and unrevealed - Deut. 29:29; 1Cor. 2:9

1. We can ask more questions than we have been given answers.

B. We have answers to all things that we need in this life.

1. 2Peter 1:3; Titus 2:11-12; 2Tim. 3:16-17

C. The unanswered questions require that we depend on our faith for answers

1. Heb. 11:1; Eph. 3:20

II. UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE

A. There are times when life is uncertain.

1. Consider the example of Abraham: God said he would have a son by Sarah; this was beyond Abraham's experience - Rom. 4:19-21

B. God assures us that when we are uncertain about life, He is there.

1. Uncertain about needs - Matt. 6:30

2. Uncertain about matters beyond human control - Matt. 8:26

3. Uncertain of self-control - Matt. 14:31

III. INEQUITIES OF LIFE

A. Life also has a certain amount of inequity.

1. There is no guarantee for justice in this life. Criminals receive little or no punishment for egregious, appalling crimes.

2. Large companies cheat from their employees, and laborers steal from the company often without consequences.
 3. Not all wrongs are made right in this life. Some are only made right after the Judgment.
 4. When we are wronged, we must trust God for justice in the end.
 - a. Ecc. 5:8
- B. Justice is served through the cross.
1. Jesus death on the cross was for the sins of humankind. If sinners call on the Lord in faith and obedience, God will pay the price for their sins.
 - a. Titus 2:14; 1Tim. 2:5-6; 2Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:25-26
 2. If one does not accept God's justice through the cross, then he must accept God's justice for eternity.
 - a. Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30; Jude 7
 3. Farther along God will make all wrongs right some day.

Conclusion:

1. "Tempted and tired we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long,
While there are others living about us,
Never molested though in the wrong."
 2. "Sometimes I wonder why I must suffer,
Go in the cold, the rain, and the snow,
While many wicked live in great splendor,
Heedless of where at last they must go."
 3. "Tempted and tried how often we question
Why we must suffer year after year,
Being accused by those of our loved ones,
E'en though we walk in God's holy fear."
 4. "Often when death has taken our loved ones,
Leaving our home so lone and so drear,
Then do we wonder why others prosper
Living so wicked year after year."
 5. "'Faithful till death,' saith our loving Master;
Short is our time to labor and wait.
Then will our toiling seem to be nothing
When we shall pass the heavenly gate."
 6. "Soon we shall see our dear loving Savior,
Hear the last trumpet sound through the sky;
Then we will meet those gone on before us,
And we shall know and understand why."
- Refrain: Farther along we'll know more about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.