

## Abide With Me

By  
Bill Dagle

Have you made preparations for your funeral yet? Yes, I know, that's a strange way to start a story; but bear with me. The end will justify the beginning. We spend so much time preparing for life, which at best, is three score and ten, and so little time in preparing for eternity. When the final hour arrives, will you be ready and will your loved ones and friends know where you are?

Henry Francis Lyte wrote a hymn on September 4, 1847, almost a hundred years before I was born, that caught my interest. A man, frail in body but strong in spirit, he had pastored a poor parish church at Lower Brixhan, Devonshire, England for 23 years. Now, he was dying. His doctor advised him to move to Italy where the climate would be less severe. This would be his last Sunday in England, his last chance to bid farewell to his loved ones and friends. Have I caught your interest?

"Oh brethren," he said as he entered the familiar pulpit for the last time, "I stand here before you today, as alive from the dead, if I may hope to impress upon you and get you to prepare for that solemn hour which must come to all. I plead with you to become acquainted with the changeless Christ and His death." He then closed the service by administering communion to his weeping church family. That evening, he put on paper a poem expressing his confidence in an unchanging Christ and gave it to an adopted daughter that very night.

Setting out the next day for Italy, he reached Nice, France, where he had a seizure and died. Henry Lyte is remembered for coining the phrase, "It is better to wear out than to rust out"; but he is also remembered for something far more important. In his preparations for his death, he left behind a message in song, a message you too can have for those who weep for you. In this life, if you are willing to admit you are a sinner, ask God for forgiveness and, in faith, allow Christ to come into your life, then you will be ready for the final hour. The Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation," and the hymn writer said:

Abide with me, falls fast the eventide  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail, and comfort flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away  
Change and decay and all around I see:  
Oh thou who changest not, abide with me!

Hold thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine thro' the gloom, and point me to the skies:  
Heav'n's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!