



Encouraging Words with DARLENE SALA

The Fountain That Washes Away Guilt

You've no doubt heard the saying, "Variety's the very spice of life," but you may not know that it was written by a famous hymn writer, William Cowper ["Cooper"]. Also one of the most popular poets of his time, he changed the direction of 18th-century poetry and greatly influenced the later Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth.

But Cowper lived a very troubled life. He suffered from periods of severe depression which caused him to attempt to take his life on numerous occasions. In fact, John Newton, author of that favorite hymn "Amazing Grace," saved him from suicide several times. Hoping to lift his spirits by keeping him busy, Newton suggested that he and Cowper co-author a book of hymns, which they did—280 hymns in all.

After his first attack of deep depression, William felt as if he had offended God so deeply that his guilt could never be forgiven. He became impressed with Zechariah 13:1, which says "'On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David...to cleanse them from sin and impurity.'" Cowper came to realize God can erase the stain of any sin, and from that inspiration he wrote one of his earliest and most famous hymns:

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.

William Cowper died in the year 1800, and in Westminster Abbey, where some of the greatest in the world are enshrined and honored, the first stained glass window on the left is that of William Cowper. Underneath are the words, "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood."

The apostle Paul declared good news when wrote, "All...are justified freely...through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus...through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:23-25).