

*Hymn 520, Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness*

The author of the words of this hymn was born in the year 1700 in Germany, into one of the most noble and wealthy families in all of Germany. At age six, young Nikolaus who was already trained in the German Lutheran church, would often write love letters to Jesus. He would then climb to the castle tower and toss them out the window, where they scattered around the courtyard like innocent prayers. During the Great Northern War, Swedish soldiers overran that area in 1706. They entered the room where young Nickolas just happened to be conducting his customary devotions. The soldiers were incredibly moved by the boy's prayer. As he grew up, he went on to study law at the University of Wittenberg, and became highly educated in order to prepare for a career in government; yet he had become a godly man. He was properly called Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, but his true desire was to support missions.

By the time he was 22 years old, he had fully inherited his family's estate of Bertelsdorf in Saxony, Germany. In that same year, a group of Christians who had been persecuted over in Moravia (modern-day Czech Republic), were fleeing and they sought refuge on his estate. He permitted them to settle there, even to build on a corner of the land. Over the next ten years, by 1732, this Moravian settlement took on the name Herrnhut, the Lord's Shelter, and they had grown to over 600 people. This is considered the birth-place of the Moravian denomination, taken in by Zinzendorf.

Zinzendorf felt called into the ministry, received ministry training and was ordained in 1734. Two things that the Moravian church and their leader Zinzendorf became known for were: love for missions and love for church music. This community became widely known as a flourishing colony of strong believers, and great congregational singers.

In 1737, Zinzendorf became the leader of the Moravian churches in Berlin, Germany. He spoke a lot about personal religion, what he called 'Christianity of the heart.'

Von Zinzendorf wrote the words of this hymn in 1739, while he was on board a ship traveling home to Germany after visiting overseas missionaries whom he was supporting. His best-known hymn is this one, 'Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness.'

Von Zinzendorf lived another 20 years, until the year 1760, and he is credited with writing more than 2,000 hymns. He was continually involved in editing and publishing new Moravian hymnals. These hymnals were translated into languages around the world. Zinzendorf had as his life's motto, "I have but one passion, and that is He and only He."

Let's sing all the verses.