



Devotional: The Wonder of God's Greatness

Biblical reflections on a famous hymn – *How Great Thou Art*

The Christian hymn "How Great Thou Art" was originally written as a Swedish poem called "O Store Gud" in 1885 by Carl Boberg. The familiar English version was translated and expanded in 1949 by British missionary Stuart K. Hine, who set it to a traditional Swedish folk melody.

Recently, my Bible Study group spent time reflecting on the much-loved hymn *How Great Thou Art*. Many people associate it with the Billy Graham crusades of the 1950s, where George Beverly Shea's rich voice carried it across stadiums. Yet its origins reach back to 1885, when a Swedish pastor was so moved by the majesty of God's creation that he penned a poem of praise—words that would eventually become this cherished hymn:

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed!*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,*

*And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in—
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin!*

*When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

Like many older hymns, it is woven through with strong biblical themes and deep theological truth. *How Great Thou Art* speaks of God's work in creation, His redeeming love in Christ, and the sure promise of Christ's return.

It is also an expression of pure wonder. "*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds Thy hands have made...*" The writer—along with a later author who added two additional verses—was overwhelmed by God's greatness, revealed both in nature and in grace. That sense of wonder is something we should never lose.

We marvel at God's work in creation - in the beauty and complexity of the natural world, and the creativity he expresses through human beings. We also rejoice in His redeeming work. Scriptures echoed in the themes woven through the hymn include:

God's greatness in Creation. Psalm 8: 1 "*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory in the heavens...*"

Romans 1:20: "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*"

God's love in Redemption. Romans 5:8: "*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

Our future hope in Christ. Philippians 3:20–21: "*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who... will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.*"

Why is it so important that we never lose our sense of wonder at these truths?

- Wonder leads naturally to thanksgiving and praise. It keeps our hearts soft, and grateful for all God has done for us.
- It steadies us in a world marked by sorrow and suffering. At a time when technology brings us images of war and cruelty daily, this wonder becomes a quiet antidote to despair.
- It helps us live attentively to God's presence in his creation - in nature, and in people through whom he inspires beauty such as art and music.
- It shapes our lives and service: deepening our worship, enriching our prayers, and renewing our hope.

The chorus of the hymn is a response to all these wonders: *Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art.*

The hymn sung by George Beverly Shea can be found [here](#)

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PRAYER:

Our God, we praise you for your awesome deeds; for making us in your own image and giving us such a beautiful world. For our capacity to share in creative work by your gifting and enabling. Above all we thank you for the ability to have relationship with you through your redeeming love in sending Jesus to die for us.