

Hymn of the Week

Bible Sunday

### **How firm a foundation**

Words: John Rippon (1751-1836)

Tune: Montgomery by Samuel Jarvis (1742-1784) or John Stanley (1712-1786)

This hymn, which may not be as well known to you as some, is frequently and quite incorrectly attributed to the Mormon Church in the USA. In fact the hymn is the work of John Rippon a Baptist Minister at New Park Street Chapel in London which post he took up at age 20 and retained for a further 63 years. New Park Street Chapel had seating for 1,200 and probably the largest Baptist Congregation in the country by the time of Rippon's death. Although a significant hymn writer in his own right, Rippon was also recognized as probably the greatest authority on the works of Isaac Watts, the monumental hymn writer of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The hymn, based on 1 Peter 1:23 and Isaiah 41:10 seeks to demonstrate that a sound faith, firmly based on the word of God will sustain us through any trials that the world may throw at us and, holding to that faith, we will never be forsaken.

In 1835 the hymn crossed the Atlantic and has appeared in every Mormon hymn book published since hence the mistaken attribution I mentioned at the outset.

In the UK the hymn is most frequently sung to the tune Montgomery which was either composed by the virtually unknown Samuel Jarvis or, as I prefer to believe, the great (and blind) London organist John Stanley with whose work it has many similarities

*How firm a foundation* is sung here by the congregation of The Metropolitan Tabernacle – London which is the successor building to Rippon's New Park Street Chapel, even today the average Sunday congregation is 500 which is perhaps evident in the strength of this rendition

<https://youtu.be/DwjRWww85aE?list=RDDwjRWww85aE>

Keith Day

15<sup>th</sup> October 2025