

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/25; BC A153

21. S. after Trinity (BWV 109, 38, 98, 188)

*Ephesians. 6:10–17 (The armor of the Christian)

*John 4:46–54 (Christ heals the son of a royal official)

Librettist: Probably Christoph Birkmann (see note).

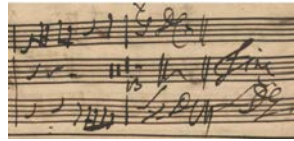
FP: 11 October 1726 (Leipzig: St. Nicholas). This cantata belongs to Bach's third cantata cycle in Leipzig (see notes).

Regarding Bach's discouragement after 1725, see third note.

The cantata is in chiasmic form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). The intentional absence of a closing chorale is confirmed by Bach's markings at the end of the score and most of the performing parts.

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 98

Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan



The opening movement sets stanza 1 of the 1674 chorale by Samuel Rodigast (1649–1708). Martin Petzoldt notes that hymnals of the time did not specify this chorale for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. He regards

this setting of the chorale as Bach's most intimate, showing especially strong connection to the final line "Drum laß ich ihn nur walten" ("Therefore I will just allow him to rule")—a strong expression of faith reminiscent of the centurion in the Gospel reading. Accordingly, Bach's setting emphasizes the final line (see below). See "Bach-Kommentar" 1:602–603.



Instrumentation:

Oboe I, II

Taille

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo

Regarding this cantata, Karin Wollschläger writes, "Out of the gospel reading...in which Jesus heals a nobleman's son, [the librettist] crystallized the subjects despair, trust, and answered prayers, and puts these into the mouth of a subjective 'self.'" See *Johann Sebastian Bach. These Sacred Vocal Music Complete Edition. Cantatas* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2017), vol. 9, p. 170 (translated by David Kosviner).

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.

The cantata's symmetrical structure is reinforced in that the opening and closing movements are both chorale based, both recitatives are secco, and both arias have single obbligato instruments.

98/1. **1. Coro (Vers 1)** (Chorale) (See also 99/1, 100/1, 144/3.)
 • God's sovereign will trusted & accepted (98/1).

Figura corta (see later note).

Second of 3 cantatas beginning with one of Bach's favorite chorales but not a chorale cantata.

Viol. I
Viol. II
Va.
Ritornello
Bc.

B-flat major B-flat 7 B dim.7 G7

B dim.7 C minor F7

Pauses function rhetorically to emphasize a point, engage the listeners, and allow them to ponder...

Continuo figure reappears in the vocal bass at m. 62 for the repetition of "drum laß ich ihn nur walten: (thus I will just let him rule)".

B-flat major C7

F major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

13

F major B-flat major C7

16 **A** (NB. Der Cantus firmus „Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan“ im Sopran)

Soprano Chorale lines 1/3.

+Ob I

Chorale put in triple meter.

Was Gott tut, das ist wohl - ge -

Alto wie er fängt mei - ne Sa - chen

+Ob II

Stollen 1 & 2 of the chorale's bar form.

Tenore

This was apparently one of Bach's favorite chorales and the acceptance of God's sovereign will was apparently an important life principle for Bach (see notes).

Was Gott tut, das ist wohl - ge -

Basso wie er fängt mei - ne Sa - chen

Ob. I col Soprano

Ob. II coll' Alto

Taille col Tenore

Was Gott tut, das ist wohl - ge -

Wie er fängt mei - ne Sa - chen

Upper strings tacet.

The continuo embellishes the vocal bass line with the figura corta (see later note).

F major F7 B-flat major

For biblical background, see note.

20

tan, an, es will

tan, an, es will

tan, an, es will

tan, an, es will

tan, an, es will

For word-for-word English translations, see Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*.

Strings

B-flat major B-flat 7 B dim.7 G7 C minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

24

bleibt ich ge - recht sein Wil - le;
ich ihm hal - ten stil - le;

bleibt ich ge - recht sein Wil - le;
ich ihm hal - ten stil - le;

bleibt ich ge - recht sein Wil - le;
ich ihm hal - ten stil - le;

bleibt ich ge - recht sein Wil - le;
ich ihm hal - ten stil - le;

Strings tacet.

F(7) B-flat major B-flat major B-flat major

27

le.

le.

le.

le.

le. NBA: m. 53.

B-flat 7
B-flat major

30

E-flat major F7 B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

NBA: m. 59.

33

B-flat major

NBA: m. 62.

NBA: m. 64.

Chorale line 5.

36

Er

Er

Er

Er

E-flat major E-flat major

B-flat 7

F7 B-flat major

B-flat major

B-flat 7

NBA: m. 65.

39

ist mein Gott,

ist mein Gott,

ist mein Gott,

ist mein Gott,

E-flat major

F(7)

B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

42 NBA: m. 68. Chorale line 6.

der in der Not

der in der Not

der in der Not

der in der Not

45 NBA: m. 71. B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 Chorale line 7.

mich

mich

mich

mich

48 NBA: m. 74. D major B dim.7 C minor F7 B-flat major

wohl weiß zu er - hal -

wohl weiß zu er - hal -

wohl weiß zu er - hal -

wohl weiß zu er - hal -

C7 F major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

51 NBA: m. 77.

ten;
ten;
ten;
ten;

F major F major (F7) F# dim.7 D7 G minor

55 NBA: m. 81.

drum
drum
drum
drum

C Chorale line 8.

(B-flat major) D minor

59 C7 NBA: m. 85.

laß ich ihn nur wal
laß ich ihn nur wal
laß ich ihn nur wal
laß ich ihn nur wal

Strings tacet.

B-flat major F7

Bach emphasizes the last line with animated, imitative counterpoint in the lower voices, repeating the words ("therefore I will just allow him to rule") while the soprano sustains the last note of the cantus firmus for six measures.

62 NBA: m. 88.

ten.

ten, drum, drum laß ich ihn nur wal -

ten, drum, drum laß ich ihn nur wal -

ten, drum laß ich ihn nur wal -

Continuo figure from ritornello, mm. 9-10, reappears, a tone lower.

Strings

B-flat 7 E-flat major

65 NBA: m. 91.

ten.

ten.

ten.

F7 B-flat major B-flat major

69 NBA: m. 95.

B-flat 7 B dim.7 C minor B-flat (7)

73 NBA: m. 99.

E-flat major F7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

NBA: m. 102.

76

B-flat major

NBA: m. 105.

79

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

98/2. 2. Recitativo • Prayer for help; declaration of confidence in God (98/2).

1. Tenore

Ach Gott, wann wirst du mich ein-mal von mei-ner Lei-dens-
Ah God, when wilt thou me at-last from my suffering's

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in the equivalent of 5 mm.
The opening lines are reminiscent of the gospel reading as well as Habakuk 1:2 (see note).

For biblical background, see note.

Voice leading and unexpected chord progressions color individual words and ideas.

G minor A-flat

Allusion to biblical passages such as Psalm 22:1-2: My God...I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find no rest...

3

qual, von meiner Angst be-freien? Wie lan-ge soll ich Tag und Nacht um Hilfe
toil, from my fear deliver? How long must I day and night for help

G7 C minor E-flat aug 6 D major B dim.7 G7 C minor C# dim.7

Phrygian cadence often used for questions.

6

schreien? Und ist kein Retter da! Der Herr ist denen allen nah, die seiner Macht und
cry? And (there) is no savior at-hand! The Lord is to-those all night, who in-his might and

D minor A(7) D minor F7 B-flat major

Allusion to Psalm 145:18: The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. (Also Psalm 34:18.)

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

9

sei - ner Huld vertrauen. Drum will ich meine Zuversicht auf Gott al - lei - ne

his favor trust. Therefore would I my confidence upon God alone

B-flat major C major F major (for significance, see note). F7 F# dim.7

12

bau - en, denn er - ver - läßt die Sei - nen nicht.

build, for he forsakes (his) own not.

G minor B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major

Allusion to biblical passages such as Hebrews 13:5: He has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." (See Deuteronomy 31:6).

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiasmic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Here the poet insists that weeping will turn to consolation..

98/3. 3. Aria • Weeping ceases despite heavy yoke; God abandons none (98/3).

Oboe obbligato with continuo (the rest here is editorial realization).

1.

Ob. I solo Bc.

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

C minor G7 C minor

(Suspension)

Dance-like, yet displacement of accents (both musical and textual), chromatic inflections, and modulatory sequences create a sense of melancholy and yearning. In this way Bach captures the contradictory sentiments musically.

6 (110)

C minor

11 (115)

E-flat major C minor F minor

Chromatic neighbor tones Chromatic, sighing duples...

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

16 (120) Soprano

For biblical background, see note.

Hört, ihr Au-gen, auf zu wei-nen,

Cease, ye

eyes,

to

weep,

Ob.

Bc.

Oboe tacet

C minor

C minor

G7

C minor

C minor

22

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

hört, ihr Au-gen,

p

E-flat major

C minor

B-flat (7)

27

auf zu wei-nen, hört auf zu wei-

Ob.

Bc.

Oboe tacet

G7

C minor

C minor

N6

C minor

Word painting: Melisma with chromatic, sighing duples for "weeping."

32

-nen, trag ich doch mit Ge-duld

bear I

indeed

with

patience

Ob.

Ob.

C minor

B-flat 7

E-flat major

E-flat 7

37

— mein schwe — res Joch, trag — ich doch —

my heavy yoke,

A-flat major E-flat major C minor C minor

43

— mit Ge - duld, — — — — — trag ich doch mit Geduld — — — — — meinschweres Joch.

G minor D7 G minor G minor

Ob. Bc. Ritornello

49

G minor D7 G minor G(7) C minor D7

55

G minor G minor F(7)

60

B-flat major G minor G minor G minor

65

Gott, der — Va — ter, — le — bet noch, le —

God, the Father, liveth still, Ob.

Oboe tacet Bc.

E-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

(p)

70

— bet noch, von den Sei — nen

of his own

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major B dim.7 C minor

A rewording of the final line of the previous movement serves as a device of unification.

75

läßt er — kei — nen; hört auf zu wei — nen!

abandons he none; Ob.

Bc.

C minor C minor N6 C minor

Chromaticism and sighing duples return for "weeping."

81

Gott, der — Va — ter, — le — bet noch, le —

Oboe tacet Bc.

C minor E-flat 7 C(7) F minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

86

bet noch, von den Sei - nen

C7 F minor F minor

91

läßt er kei - nen; hört auf zu wei -

Even longer chromatic melisma for "weep."

Chromatic lines occur simultaneously in all three voices: oboe, singer, and continuo.

F minor F minor N6 F minor

96

F minor B dim. 7 C minor

101

nen, hört, ihr Augen, auf zu wei - nen!

Oboe tacet

Ritornello

G7 C minor C minor C minor

dal segno

98/4. **4. Recitativo** • God compassionate; his promise to hear our prayers (98–4).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm.

Alto is often the voice of faith.

For biblical background, see note.



1. **Alto** D A F# B-flat C E-flat

Gott hat ein Herz, das des Er - barmens Ü - ber - fluß! Und
God has a heart, which (is) compassion's overflow! And

Secco

D major D7 G minor

3 G C# E

wenn der Mund vor seinen Ohren klagt und ihm des Kreuzes Schmerz im Glauben und Vertrauen
when (my) mouth before his ears cries and him (of-my) cross's pain in faith and confidence

A7 Probable allusion to Jeremiah 31:20 [God]: Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child?...Therefore my heart yearns for him (Luther 1545: bricht mir mein Herz); I will surely have mercy on him (Luther 1545: sein erbarmen), says the Lord.

6 F B A-flat

sagt, so bricht in ihm das Herz, daß er sich ü - ber uns er - barmen muß
tells, then breaks in him (his) heart, so-that he - upon us take-pity must

D minor B dim.7 C minor N6 G7 F minor C minor

Allusion to Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount (see note).

9

Er hält sein Wort; er sa - get: Klopfet an, so wird euch auf - ge - tan! Drum
He keeps his word; he says: Knock, then will for-you (it) be-opened! Therefore

C minor E-flat major F7 B-flat major



12

laßt uns al - so fort, wenn wir in höchsten Nö - ten schweben, das Herz zu Gott allein erheben.
let us henceforth, when we in (the) greatest (of) distresses hover, (our) heart to God alone lift-up.

A major D minor C# dim.7 D minor

The last line quotes the opening words of a chorale by Paul Eber (1511–1569), then apparently alludes to Lamentations 3:41: Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven.

The intentional absence of a closing chorale is confirmed by Bach's markings at the end of the score and most of the performing parts. It is noteworthy that just one week prior (3 November 1726) Bach had ended Cantata 49 with a hybrid movement that combines a bass aria with a chorale sung by the soprano.

5. Aria • Persevering in prayer until God hears & blesses (98/5).

The figura corta (see note) alternates between Vln I and continuo Here the striding, gavotte-like theme portrays cheerful confidence.

Instrumentation is violin obligato and continuo. The rest here is editorial realization.

1. Viol Vln I & II

Ritornello

B-flat major B-flat major C7 F major

Rising diatonic scales reflect the diatonic ascending fourth of the chorale's opening phrase.

4 (85)

F major F major F major F7

7 (88)

B-flat major B dim.(7) G7 C minor C minor F7

9II (90II)

B-flat major B-flat major B dim.7 G7

12 (93)

C minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

Embellished chorale quotation (see below), in which one may possibly see the B-A-C-H motive (see note for more).

B - A - - - - C - H

15 Basso

Mei - nen Je - sum laß - - - ich nicht,

The 2 forms of figura corta (see note above).

Viol.

Bc.

B-flat major E-flat major

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

Regarding Bach's use of the rising diatonic 4th, see note.

For biblical background, see note.

The aria motto quotes the first line of the 1658 chorale by Christian Keymann (1607–1662), with tune by Andreas Hammerschmidt embellished. As a result, the aria may be seen as filling the role of a closing SATB chorale. The text alludes to Genesis 32:24, 26. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day...Then [the man] said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

18

The fact both opening and closing movements are chorale-based reinforces the symmetrical form.

mei - nen Je - sum laß - - - ich nicht,

The violin and singer intertwine like the Soul and Jesus (or the archetypes of heavenly messenger and Jacob).

F7 B-flat major B-flat major

Alfred Dürr writes, "The aria...acquires a double function: as a personal expression of the individual Christian—as reflected in the aria form, in solo singing, in the first person of the text, and in the expressive adornment of the chorale—and as an expression of the assembled congregation, as reflected in the introduction of the chorale as a symbol of the Church founded by Christ." See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, revised and translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 607.

21

bis mich - - - erst sein - - - An - ge - sicht wird er - hö - - -

Viol.

Be.

C7 F major

Text painting: Rising melisma suggests increasing intensity for "[Until his countenance] will grant favorable hearing to me or bless me."

24

- - - hen o - der segnen; mei - nen Je - sum laß - - - ich

C7

27

nicht, bis mich - - - erst sein - - - An - ge - sicht wird er - hö - - -

Viol.

Be.

F major N6 F7 B-flat major C7

A wide-ranging violin obbligato (with frequent octave leaps) reinforces the idea "Er allein soll mein Schutz in allem sein, was mir Übels kann begegnen" (He alone shall be my shield in all those things in which I could encounter misfortune).

30

hen o - der seg - - - - - nen, wird er - hö - hen o - der seg - -

Viol.

Bc.

F major

33

nen.

Ritornello

F major

F major

G major

C major

36

C7

C major

39

F major

F# dim.

D7

G minor

C7

F major

42

F major

F# dim.7

G minor

C7

45

Er al - lein, er al -

F major F major F major D7

48^{II}

lein, er allein soll mein Schutz in allem sein, was mir Ü -

G minor F7 G minor D7 G minor D7 G minor

Viol.

52

- - - - - bels kann begegnen; er al - lein soll mein

G minor G minor G minor

55

Schutz in al - lem sein, was mir Übels kann be - geg - - - - - nen,

G minor B7 G major C minor D major

Bc.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

58

— was — mir Ü — bels kann be — geg — nen. Viol.

G minor

G minor

G minor

61

B-flat major

B-flat major

64

Mei — nen — Je — sum — laß — ich nicht. Viol.

Bc.

B-flat 7

66II

mei — nen — Je — sum —

E-flat major

E-flat major

69

laß — ich nicht, bis mich — erst sein — An — ge — sicht wird er —

Viol.

Bc.

E-flat major

F7

B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 98

72

h ö - - - - - hen o - der segnen;

B-flat major

74^{II}

mei - nen Je - sum laß ich nicht, bis mich

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major Bc.

77

erst sein An - ge - sicht wird er - hö - - - - hen o - der seg -

Viol. Bc.

B-flat major N6 C minor F7 B-flat major

80

- - - - - nen, wird er - hö - hen o - der seg - - - - - nen.

Ritornello

B-flat major dal segno