

Giving under Grace

“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” (1 Chronicles 29.14b)



George Matheson was born in Glasgow in 1842. When he was eighteen months old, his mother discovered that he had defective sight. In his early boyhood, by using strong glasses and a strong light, he managed to read; but his sight continued to fail. When he entered Glasgow University, at the age of fifteen-and-a-half, he was almost blind and had to depend on the sight of others. He was licensed as a minister of the Church of Scotland in 1866.

He wrote the hymn, “O Love that wilt not let me go,” on the evening of 6th June 1882, when the lady to whom he had been engaged felt that his blindness prevented their marriage. In his own words, “The hymn was the fruit of that suffering.” He never married.

In 1890 he wrote the hymn which begins –

Make me a captive, Lord,
and then I shall be free;
force me to render up my sword,
and I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life’s alarms
when by myself I stand;
imprison me within thine arms
and strong shall be my hand.

Over the past weeks we have been thinking about different people and their response to the grace of God.

- ⇒ Count von Zinzendorf and the question posed by Feti’s painting of the suffering Christ – “All this have I done for you. What are you doing for me?” What is the response of our life to the grace of God given at such cost for us?
- ⇒ John Newton, the converted slave-trader who became both preacher and hymn-writer, author of “Amazing Grace”. If we are living under grace, we will want to give our maximum for the one who has given his maximum for us!
- ⇒ Robert Robinson, the converted hairdresser who wrote ‘Come, thou fount of every blessing’ – “O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be.” Have we been overwhelmed by the grace of God? Are we ‘debtors to grace’? Do we respond to the Lord with overflowing joy and rich generosity?
- ⇒ George Matheson, the blind preacher who knew God’s joy seeking him through pain and wanted the freedom of belonging wholly to God.

We think of stewardship as “the bit we put in the plate.” But it begins with the overwhelming gift of God and our response to his grace. All that we have and are truly belongs to him. True stewardship becomes a total way of living and giving under grace.