

Charles Wesley

by Michael Haykin

Charles Wesley was a shy and retiring man who struggled with public ministry, but ultimately found victory over his own temperament through faith, and his hymns had a profound impact on the Methodist movement.

Duration: 1:32:31

Scripture: Isaiah 35:4-6, Matthew 11:4-5, Ephesians 2:8, Colossians 2:14

Topics: "Gods Love", "Salvation Through Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the amazing and mysterious love of God. He relates it to the revival that took place in the 18th century, where people were set free from sin and followed Christ. The preacher emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice and witnessing to others. He also highlights the significance of Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection, proclaiming that through faith and grace, we can be saved and justified. The sermon concludes with praise and exaltation of Jesus as the resurrection and the Lord of earth and heaven.

Transcript

Well, tonight we want to think about Charles Wesley. And you should have a sheet that was passed out, which will provide you with three of his hymns, three of roughly 6,000 hymns, and so it's a very, very minuscule percentage that you have available to you there, but we want to note and quote some other aspects of some of his hymns. Notice the title of the lectures tonight.

It's not actually words of Charles, but words of his brother John. Sing lustfully and with good courage. And these lines come from a series of directions that John Wentley gave to those who were singing his brother's hymns, his own hymns and other hymns of the church.

And this comes from the fourth direction where John Wesley said that Christians, as they sang, should sing lustfully and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you are half dead or half asleep. Lift up your voice with strength.

And that little introduction gives you some idea of the importance that John Wesley and also Charles Wesley placed on singing. It was John Wesley's heir apparent, the man whom he hoped would succeed him as the leader of the Methodist movement, a man named John Fletcher, who did not succeed John Wesley because he predeceased him, but it was John Fletcher who said once that next to the Bible, one of the greatest blessings that God had given to the Methodists is their hymns. Or J. I. Packer talking about

Charles Wesley as a hymn writer can describe him this way.

He is the supreme poet of love to Jesus in a revival context. He is the supreme poet of love to Jesus in a revival context. And when we come to the conclusion of the second lecture, I want to come back to that quote because I want to quote as an appropriate conclusion two stanzas from one of Wesley's hymns that brings this out very clearly.

Now before I look at Wesley's life, and that's what I want to look at first, and his ministry, and then I want to turn our attention to his hymns, looking at some characteristics of his hymns, three in particular, and then looking at two hymns in detail, over a thousand tongues to sing, and can it be that I should gain. Before I do any of that, I want to preface all of my remarks with a brief, brief excursion into the history of hymn writing. And it is brief.

I'm sure you're aware that the scriptures, the New Testament here is what I'm thinking of, encourage believers to sing hymns. One has only to think of a passage like Ephesians 5, where in verse 18, the apostle Paul says, Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is a clear differentiation made there, a clear distinction made between psalms, that body of literature we call the book of psalms in the Old Testament, which were sung, the sung worship of the old covenant people, and our Lord Jesus, as he worshipped in the synagogue, would have used that songbook, if you want to describe it that way.

But there's a clear distinction made in that verse between psalms and hymns. And scholars, as they've probed this, have come to the conviction that in the New Testament church there was the creation of what we would describe today as hymns. In fact, some scholars believe that they can actually see embedded in some New Testament letters early hymns.

For instance, Philippians chapter 2 verses 5-11, where it talks about, Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus, who did not think it a robbery to be equal to God or something to be seized, but humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death ultimately. And some scholars have argued that that actually is an early Christian hymn that the Apostle Paul is quoting. But be that as it may, whether or not we can actually find in the New Testament early hymns, certainly as you move outside of the New Testament, you find hymns being written.

There was a book called the Psalms of, or the Odes rather, of Solomon, the Psalms of Solomon, an early Christian hymn book written around the year 180-190, and it has only come to light in probably the past hundred years, but an early hymn book. As you move into the fourth century, you find a man like Ambrose of Milan, the man for whom Augustine was converted, or at least played an instrumental role in Augustine's conversion. Ambrose writing hymns.

Augustine talking about the way in which hymns could move him deeply, and some of his trouble regarding that. He wrestled with that, whether it was the music that moved him, or the lyrics. If the music, he had problems with it, and he goes at some great length discussing this.

And then as you come into the Middle Ages, you come into a period of, in some respects, a period of great hymn writing. Bernard of Clairvaux, and we still sing some of his hymns in translation. But there are hymns written in the Middle Ages.

And then in the Reformation, we have a man like Martin Luther, whose great hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, is probably one of the few that have come down to us from that period. But in the English-speaking world, after the Reformation, and I've been moving fast, in the English-speaking world, after the Reformation, most denominational bodies sang only psalms in worship. They did not sing hymns.

And there were various arguments made in this regard. One of the most common was that the psalms were the inspired songbook for God's people. It would be wrong to sing any other hymns, any other songs, because they were of human composition.

If you think that through rigorously, it would mean that you wouldn't, that preaching also will be ruled out of court. All you would do is read the scriptures, which are inspired. And because preaching is of human composition, it too would be ruled out of court.

But nonetheless, most denominational bodies in the 1500s, after the Reformation, and all through the 1600s, sang nothing but the psalms. This was especially the case in the Anglican Church, and it was also the case among Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England. And the Quakers went even one bit further, and they rejected hymn singing altogether.

They didn't sing anything. Not even the psalms, not the hymns at all. Now, it was among the Baptists that hymn singing is recovered.

Of course, as we come into the 18th century, the two greatest hymn writers are not, neither of them are Baptists. Isaac Watts, a Congregationalist, and Charles Wesley, an Anglican. But it's the Baptists in the 1670s who begin to write hymns for worship.

And there are a number of names that one could mention, but let me mention the name Benjamin Keech, K-E-A-C-H, who died in 1704. He had been experimenting with writing hymns as early as the 1670s, and occasionally introduced them at the end of a service, allowing the people who didn't want to listen or sing the hymn to leave before the hymn was sung. He was wise.

He knew that there were those in the congregation who felt that what he was doing was wrong, not biblical, and had no biblical foundation. Finally, in the 1690s, he had gotten to the point that he felt that the hymn singing should be a regular part of every worship service, and so he asked the congregation to vote on the issue. The majority of the congregation approved that at the end of each service there would be sung a hymn.

Some did not. And there was a somewhat of an acerbic or acidic split, and a number of those who went out over this issue were led by, among those who went out was a man named Isaac Marlow. And Marlow wrote a number of books against this former pastor, attacking the custom of singing hymns in worship.

Keech himself wrote a book, probably a very important book, because it will pave the way for Isaac Watts, and Benjamin Keech's book is called *The Bleach Repaired in God's Worship*. *The Bleach Repaired in God's Worship*, in which he defended the singing of hymns, and did so on the basis of the very passage we read earlier, Ephesians 5, 18-21, as well as others, like James 5, 13, which talks about singing a hymn. Now, but it's Isaac Watts who is remembered as the father of English hymnody, and not Benjamin Keech.

Benjamin Keech provides the argument for the support of hymn singing. He also tried to write some hymns. C. H. Spurgeon, many years later, had a very negative view of them.

He described them as mere doggerel, or mere rubbish, and intimated that Keech might have won his entire congregation over to the practice of hymn singing, if some of the hymns they'd had to sing hadn't been so bad, because he had composed them himself. But a recent scholar who's examined some of Keech's hymns says that's going probably a bit too far, it's being a bit extreme and a bit hard on poor Keech, and has argued that some of Keech's hymns are okay, they're not great, they're not worthy of remembrance by congregations, but they're not as bad as Spurgeon emphasized. What is important about Keech is he paved the way for the recognition that hymn singing among English-speaking congregations should be a part of worship once again.

But it's Isaac Watts, who is the father, and rightly so called, the father of English hymnody, or the English hymn. Watts was born in 1674, he would die in 1748. There are two great hymn writers in the 18th century, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley.

The story goes that Watts, as a young man in his late teens, early twenties, was on one occasion returning with his father for worship in the local congregational church to which his father belonged as a deacon. And Watts complained about poverty of their worship. The fact that as they sang the psalms here they were a New Covenant people, but they could not name the head of the New Covenant, the institute of the New Covenant by name, namely the Lord Jesus Christ in their sung worship.

There were psalms, as you well know, that are messianic in intent, they speak about the Lord Jesus Christ, but they do so in veiled terms. One thinks of Psalm 2 or Psalm 110, both psalms that figure prominently in the New Testament as being interpreted as having reference to the Messiah, who we know as the Lord Jesus, but his name is not mentioned in either of those psalms. And so Watts complaining then to his father, here they were, a Christian congregation, singing worship to God, but they could not name the Lord Jesus explicitly in their worship.

And he complained of the poverty of their worship, therefore, to his father. His father's response, apparently, was, well, young Isaac, if you can do better, why don't you go ahead and try? Well, the rest is history, because Isaac did do a lot better. And he basically composed two hymnals.

The first hymnal appears in 1707, called Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Charles Wesley could not have done any of what he did if this book and Watts' pioneering work had not gone before. And a number of very powerful hymns in that hymnal are still sung today.

And the second hymnal that Watts produced appeared in 1719. And that was a hymnal that was primarily a paraphrase of the psalms. Watts wanted Christian congregations not to completely forget the psalms, he wanted them to sing hymns, but also remember that God had provided the psalms in the Old Testament to be sung.

And so in 1719, he produced a paraphrase of the psalms. And probably the most famous of those would be the one based on Psalm 72, Jesus shall reign. Or, O God, our help in ages past, based on Psalm 90.

But the other great hymn writer of the 18th century is the one that we want to think about in more detail tonight. And that is Charles Wesley. That's the background to the whole issue of hymn singing.

It makes you realize that in the 18th century, hymn singing was a controversial thing. It could even be regarded as revolutionary. It certainly wouldn't be regarded that way today.

And Christian congregations split up the issue. I don't know how many minute books I've read of Baptist congregations where at the beginning of the minute book it will affirm a statement of faith and among the articles of the statement of faith will be, we believe in hymn singing. Or, we do not believe in hymn singing.

And this was a very explosive issue in the period. Well, Charles Wesley. I want to look first at something of his temperament and then we'll move into looking at his life and we'll see how far we go before we stop and we may be able to look at some of the characters.

Charles was the 18th child of Samuel Wesley and his wife Susanna. Both of them had Puritan roots. On Samuel's side, Samuel was a Church of England minister, Anglican minister, but his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather had been Puritan ministers.

And both Samuel Wesley's father and grandfather had actually been expelled for their Puritan convictions from the Church of England in 1662. Samuel Wesley as a teenager, though, rejoined the Church of England and almost to kind of indicate his break with his past, he changed his name subtly. He dropped a T that was found in the name between the S and the L. His father's name and his grandfather's name was Wesley.

W-E-S-T-L-Y, or L-E-Y, rather. L-Y, sorry, and he dropped the T and made it simply Wesley. It could well have been the fact that the T was dropped in pronunciation.

Anyway, that may very well be possible. That's important to remember, the Puritan roots of the Wesley brothers. Both of them will be raised Anglican, committed Anglicans.

Charles much more than John, but their roots are Puritan. On the mother's side, Susanna, there are also Puritan roots. Her father, Samuel Ainslie, was a great Presbyterian leader.

He also had been expelled from the Church of England in 1662 when there was a great exodus of Puritan leaders from the Church of England. About 2,000 ministers left on August the 24th, 1662, when a law known as the Act of Uniformity became law and binding, which required every minister who conducted a service of worship to use nothing but the Book of Common Prayer and to adhere to it rigorously, to use all of its prayers and the orders of service found in it. So a number of Puritan ministers, about a third roughly of the Church of England ministers left, and among them were both Charles Wesley's paternal grandfather, his paternal great-grandfather, and his maternal grandfather.

But both of his parents, Susanna and Samuel, rejoined the Church of England. Susanna was the youngest child of Samuel Ainslie. He had 25 children.

Now he was married twice. His first wife had one child. His second had 24.

And Susanna was the baby. And what a shock to the father when around the age of 12 or 13 she informed him that she was leaving his denominational body and rejoining the Church of England. He had spent his life suffering for convictions that led him outside of the Church of England and here his youngest daughter rejoined the Church of England.

And so it was that Susanna in later life married Samuel Wesley. The marriage was not the happiest of marriages. It was not a good marriage in many respects.

And much of the blame falls on Samuel. He was not the best of fathers, and we won't go into that. There are a number of lives of the Wesleys written today which will spell some of that out.

Susanna, though, was an ideal mother in many respects. Homeschooled all of the children. Eventually, out of the 19 children she bore, nine reached adulthood.

Now those figures are not untypical. Charles and his wife Sally will have eight children. They will bury five before the age of two.

Of the nine children she bore, three sons, six daughters, she homeschooled them all in their early years. And that meant setting apart time all through the week for each of them where she would instruct them in various things including the Christian faith. Charles was a shy and retiring man.

In later years, after his conversion, he will be a preacher and find himself placed by God before thousands often. And one thinks, for instance, of the time in which he was preaching in London before a crowd in a place called Moorfields where they used to hold fairs and a great impact made on that crowd. But Charles was very in great inner turmoil afterwards that he couldn't continue preaching to such large crowds and wrote a letter to George Whitfield and said, I'm continually tempted to leave off preaching and hide myself.

Do not reckon on me, my brother, in the work God is doing. I cannot expect God to long employ one who is ever longing and murmuring to be discharged. But God did not discharge him, at least not at that point.

And I suspect that when he wrote this hymn, I'm going to read now, A Charge to Keep I Have, Charles Wesley was thinking of his struggle with his own temperament. He wrestled with the fact that God required him to be often in public ministry in this way. And here is the hymn that he wrote, which I think brings home very clearly Charles Wesley's victory over his own temperament.

We're all born with temperaments. Some of us have areas of, well, all of us have areas of struggle with our temperaments. And we can't do anything about them often.

But God does give grace to wrestle with them and have victory. Here is Wesley's hymn, A Charge to Keep I Have, A Charge to Keep I Have, A God to Glorify, A Never Dying Soul to Save, And to Fit It for the Sky, To Serve the Present Age, My Calling to Fulfill, O Man, All My Powers Engage To Do My Master's Will, Arm Me with Jealous Care, As in Thy Sight to Live, And O Thy Servant Lord, Prepare a Strict Account to Give, Help Me to Watch and Pray, And on Thyself Rely, Assured if I My Trust Betray, I Shall Forever Die. And I suspect that Charles Wesley is thinking about his own temperament when he wrote that hymn and the struggle he had being a public figure, but also the victory God gave him.

Some other aspects of Charles' temperament need to be noticed. John Wesley characterized himself as a man full of business. He was a very busy man, a man who regarded his earnestness as a major virtue.

Methodist tradition has remembered the older Wesley. John Wesley was four years older than his brother. He was born in 1703.

Charles was born in 1707. Methodist tradition has remembered John as a man of Herculean strength, a man who accomplished incredible things for God, an ardent evangelist. Charles, maybe fitting his more shy temperament, maybe also fitting his more poetic temperament, was a very different sort of man in many, many respects.

One can never think, and in fact I'm sure it never happened, of John stopping to look at a sunset and writing a poem about it. But Charles did. He wrote a poem called *Written at Land's End*, describing a journey he was once on, preaching in Cornwall and having to go to the end of the Cornish Peninsula, which juts out into the Atlantic, and watching the sun come down, and writing a poem after it.

That's not John. Samuel Johnson, the great man of letters, on one occasion had John Wesley for dinner. It frustrated him to no end, because after dinner, as soon as Wesley had done his business and said what he wanted to say to Samuel, he was up and gone.

And Samuel noted in his diary that along the following lines, it was a frustrating experience. I'm a man who, after dinner, likes to stretch and fold his legs and have a good chat. But Wesley was up and about his business.

But nonetheless, despite the difference in temperament, and there was a strong difference in temperament, John was a much stronger figure outwardly, more dominant outwardly. Despite that, they had a partnership. In fact, they called it their partnership.

And that ministry yielded rich dividends, which still is bearing fruit down to this day. One thinks of the twists and turns of history. I want to mention this one final story before we move into looking at his life in some detail.

One thinks of the twists of history. When he was a young boy, he was offered the opportunity to leave his father's home, his rectory, and to go and be the adopted heir and son of a cousin in Ireland, a man named Gareth Wesley. And Charles Shire, needing the love and friendship of his family and those around him, declined.

Another cousin went, a man named Richard Colley. And Richard Colley became, therefore, Richard Colley Wesley. He was the grandfather of the Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.

And one wonders if Charles Wesley had gone and had become that heir, how history would have been changed. It's very interesting when you probe these sorts of things. As it was, Charles stayed at home, was raised in a rectory of his father, Epworth Rectory in Lincolnshire.

And he left also a much greater record of victory, more permanent than any empire, than the Duke of Wellington might have left after the conquest of Napoleon at Waterloo. Well, that's his temperament. And you need to see that as his background.

And now we want to look then at his life. He was born in 1707. He was born a couple of months premature.

His early days were spent wrapped in wool, laid by the fire to keep him warm. Apparently neither opened his eyes for a couple of months, nor raised his voice. He would raise his voice, not stop after 1738, his conversion.

His early years were spent certainly being, as we've noted, being homeschooled by Susanna. His father was a presence in the house, but a somewhat troublesome presence. Caused problems for the brothers, not for Charles, but for his two brothers, John and Samuel.

Caused immense problems for at least two of the sisters. In the 1720s, 1726 to be exact, when Charles was 19, he went up to Oxford. You go up to Oxford in Cambridge, that's the language you use, and then you come down.

I don't know why that is. Oxford and Cambridge are on the flat, they're not hilly. But he went up to Oxford to study in 1726.

His first year was like many undergraduates. He was intent on simply having a good time. And then a change appears in him in 1727, and he starts a group called the Holy Club.

We mentioned this two weeks ago when we looked at George Whitefield. And now George Whitefield would become a member of that Holy Club. A group of about a dozen men intent on winning heaven through their own holiness, their own strength, their own righteousness.

Men would gather together on a weekly basis to study the scriptures, to receive the Lord's table together, to pray together, to read Christian classics together, and then to go out to share their faith in prisons especially, and in hospitals. Sharing it with those who are sick and those who are condemned criminals. But what is important to note is none of them were converted individuals.

None of them had anything that we would describe as a biblical faith. It was rather a faith in their own righteousness, the idea that if they were good enough ultimately, then they would have heaven as their reward. But even here we see the great emphasis on discipline and being ardent in discipleship.

Nearly ten years were to elapse before Wesley was converted on May 21, 1738, Pentecost Sunday. In the meantime he had become a Church of England minister, he had become a deacon, and then become a priest. He had gone to America with his brother, John in 1736 had come up with a brilliant idea of going to America to be a missionary to the Indians.

Charles did not want to go, John told him he was going, and Charles went. Charles lasted a few months, John lasted two years. John would come back, and echoing I think the same sentiments that Charles would have had, I went to America to convert the Indians, but who will convert me? But critical, and Charles doesn't mention this, but critical in that 1736 experience was the voyage over to America where they went on board a ship, they sailed from England in January, you don't sail the Atlantic in January.

Then as now it was a time of storm and tempest, not surprisingly the ship nearly foundered and sank, but on board the ship were a group of Moravians, German speaking evangelicals who had known revival in their community back in the late 1720s and for whom that revival had been a means of uniting them around a common vision, a common goal of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. And the Moravians began to send out missionaries and in fact out of a community of 6,000 in a space of about 20 years they sent out about 600 missionaries, about a tenth of their people went out as missionaries, and not to easy places either, to places like Morocco and Algeria, both of them Muslim, or Sri Lanka or South Africa, or Greenland, or what was then the American frontier, the Ohio Valley, laboring among first peoples in America. Well among the missionaries who went out were those who were on board that ship in 1736.

It was quite an experience as the ship was breaking up, it appeared at least in the mid January, a heavy storm battering the ship. One event stood out at least in John's mind, John and Charles both on the ship, was on a Sunday when they were worshipping down below, a number of English passengers, John was leading them in worship, and suddenly a huge wave broke over the ship and began to pour in between the

floorboards above them, the planking of the ship. The English began to scream, thinking the ship was going down to the bottom.

The Germans or the Moravians looked up apparently, John records all of this in his diary, looked up and simply kept on singing. John went later to talk to their leader, a man named August Spangenberg, and asked him, were you not afraid to die? He said, thank God we were not. Were not your women and children afraid to die? Reflecting the common view that men were tougher than women, 18th century patriarchy if you want to describe it that way.

Were not your women and children afraid to die? Thank God we were not. When they got to America, August Spangenberg reminded this conversation and he looked up John, and Charles would also be in a party for these questions, and he asked John do you believe in Jesus? And John's response, he records all of this in his diary, he did not have faith, that faith that overcomes the world, he did not have saving faith. He had an intellectual conviction that he had been raised with, he had embraced the Christian world view, but he did not have saving faith.

And the same would be true of Charles. Charles only stayed a few months, he went back to England, by 1770 he was a Christian, he was a Christian, and he was actually quite ill, and came close to death in the early months of 1738, and was living in the home of a Moravian, a man named William Holland. Another missionary, another Moravian missionary on his way to the New World booked him up.

In 1738 a man named Peter Berla, that spells B-O-E-H-L-E-R, or if you want to insist on the German spelling, B-O-H-L-E-R, who had been told about the Wesley Brothers by Spangenberg, looked up Charles, and came to talk to him about his faith. And Berla asked Charles do you hope to be saved at some point in their conversation, and Charles assured him he did. And then Berla asked him for what reasons do you hope it? And then this very telling remark, Charles said, because I've used my best endeavors to serve God.

Apparently Berla again, like Spangenberg, simply shook his head. Charles didn't say anything outwardly, but was angry, boiling inside. He later noted in his diary, what are not my endeavors a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavors? I have nothing else to give.

But again he was being brought to the realization that when it comes to salvation it is not the ardency of our strength, it's not our endeavors, it's not our righteousness, it's nothing to do with our doing, but salvation is God's work. During this period of time the man in whose house he was staying, William Holland, gave him Martin Luther's commentary in the book of Galatians to read. And on May the 17th, four days before his conversion, Charles notes in his diary both Charles and John were avid diary keepers.

John a lot more avid than Charles. I should mention by the way that John's diary, he kept two diaries. One was a record of major events and discussions and conversations and so on.

The other was a record of what he did every 15 minutes of the day. He kept that from the early 1720's until his death in the 1791. I often think of how any biographer of John Wesley has a real job cut out for him.

We know pretty well exactly what everything John was doing every 15 minutes of the day. Charles was not that avid a diary keeper but he also kept a diary. And he mentions reading this commentary by Luther on Galatians and he says, I spent some time in private with Luther who was greatly blessed to me.

I labored and waited and prayed to feel, and now he quotes Galatians 2.20, who loved me and gave himself for me. Four days later Pentecost Sunday would be the realization of that for Charles. Charles was still quite sick.

The house he was staying was this man William Holland. The sister of William Holland was a woman named Mrs. Turner. The previous evening Mrs. Turner had a dream and quite a vivid dream and in it God directed her, she would later recount, to go to Charles Wesley and to tell him, Arise in the name of Jesus Christ and be healed and believe.

And she did. That morning John had visited Charles. They had had a time of prayer together.

Then John had gone out for public worship. He was, remember, a priest, a minister in the Church of England. Charles was dozing off.

He was in that pathway zone between waking and sleeping and hears this voice saying to him, In the name of Jesus of Nazareth arise and believe and thou shalt be healed of thy infirmities. He was physically healed and that's the turning point in John's life. And John has more, or rather Charles' life, sorry, Charles' life.

That's the turning point in Charles' life. Three days later John was converted on May the 24th. He went to a Bible study where someone was reading, he tells us, Martin Luther's preface to the book of Galatians.

It was probably William Holland. We don't know that for a fact but it was probably William Holland. And John says he went very unwillingly.

But about a quarter before nine, notice the exact, he knew exactly the time he says that exact, but a quarter before nine I felt my heart strangely warmed and I did believe that Christ had died for my sins even mine and had taken away. Both of the brothers become itinerant preachers. John took to it readily.

John was a man who was almost without fear, facedown all kinds of mobs wanting to beat him up or who would actually have pitched battles to determine who was going to heckle him while he was preaching. John was a fairly fearless individual. He was only about five feet tall, not small even for that day.

Charles was not as fearless of an individual. He was more shy, more retiring, but in the grace of God, God thrust him out into public preaching and field preaching, preaching out in the open air in front of crowds of hundreds and thousands, often getting attacked physically because there were many in England who did not want to hear a message of the necessity of regeneration and the new birth and justification by faith. They were convinced that they got accepted on the basis of the fact that they were good children of the Church of England.

They didn't want to hear that they were not the children of God, that they needed to have an experience of the new birth and faith in Christ. And so it was that Charles was an itinerant preacher like his brother up until 1749. In 1749 he married a woman he had met two years earlier, a woman named Sarah Gwynne, G-W-Y-N-N-E.

She was the daughter of a Welsh Methodist. Charles at the time was 42, she was 23. Charles would die in 1788, she died in 1822.

So she outlived him nearly 40 years. She died at the age of 96. She was a gifted singer, an accomplished harpsichordist, which would fit very well with Charles's musical abilities and his gift of hymn writing.

In many respects an ideal marriage. I don't want to compare overly the marriage of Charles with that of John. John's marriage was a disaster.

Maybe that's putting it lightly. I'm not sure how else you could describe his marriage. He nearly married twice before he did marry the woman he did marry.

On one of those occasions Charles intervened and felt that John was marrying below his station and therefore arranged for the woman to marry one of their mutual friends. Bizarre. Some of the marriages end up in the 18th century.

John was quite angry at that. So when John did marry a woman named Molly Buzet he didn't tell Charles. He should have told Charles.

Charles would have told her that it was not going to be a good marriage. Much of it hangs on John. When he married he laid down the rules that he wouldn't give up one inch of his itinerary.

He travelled about three to five thousand miles a year and he wasn't going to give up an inch of it. He was going to keep preaching as much as he had always done. His wife went around with him for at least a year or two but sleeping in barns and under hedges and getting half rotten food.

You have to have an eye on a constitutionalist like John. He loved it. He just thrived on it.

She eventually gave up on it and went back to live in London. Eventually began to attack him publicly. She'd turn up sometimes where he was preaching and stand up and heckle him.

Finally John left her and she was dead and buried three days before he discovered. There is a real sadness to that aspect of John's life. Charles' marriage was ideal in many respects.

An ideal marriage. A deep devotion to each other. She was quite an attractive woman in the early years of their marriage.

Then she contracted smallpox, the great killer in the 18th century. It disfigured her quite profoundly. But it made no difference to Charles.

Very important to note that. It made no difference to Charles' love for her. They would go on to have eight children of whom they would bury five before the age of two.

A number of Charles' hymns were written out of the crucible of suffering that brought him to his life. Initially he settled at Bristol and then later settled in London. Let me begin then to look at Charles' hymns.

We'll have more to say about them in a few minutes. Charles began writing hymns almost immediately after his conversion. He had written poetry before.

He would go on to write 6,000 hymns. He's got 9,000 poems and hymns altogether. That's about 3,000 poems and 6,000 hymns.

That is a huge number of hymns. He wrote 6,000 hymns in 50 years. And most of those hymns, as we will see, over a thousand tongues to sing.

We usually sing it for maybe five or so verses. He originally had at least 16 stanzas. Many of the hymns that Wesley wrote had that many.

The Methodists loved to write. Charles Wesley wrote about ten lines of hymns every day. Ten lines of verse a day for the next 50 years.

There is an element of compulsiveness or obsessiveness in the two Wesley brothers. John keeping his diary and Charles and his hymns. But it's a great way that God has used both of those compulsivenesses.

He wanted to describe it that way. Both Charles and John regarded the hymns as central to the revival that they were involved in. They recognized what John Fletcher said that one of the greatest gifts that God gave to the Methodists was the hymnal.

And here is John writing in the preface to the hymnal that was published in 1780 for the Methodists. In it, John said that this hymnal is recommended to every truly pious reader as a means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion, of confirming faith, of enlivening hope, and of kindling and increasing love to God and man. In other words, Wesley rightly understood, both John and Charles, both the Wesleys, that these hymns are a means of deepening devotion, of actually bringing people to faith in Christ, and of kindling love to God and man.

We should never, never neglect the important role that hymns and choruses and the other aspects of sung worship play in our spiritual lives. We can be very unconscious of what we are learning through those hymns. We sing the words and they sink deep into our unconscious and they begin to shape us and so on.

Here is the hymn that Charles Wesley mentions working on a hymn within two days of his conversion. This is probably the hymn, and I've not given it to you, this is probably the hymn that he was working on. And I'm going to read the first four stanzas.

It's called, Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin? And you can see in this first four stanzas very much his reflection on his conversion. Where shall my wondering soul begin? How shall I all to heaven aspire, a slave redeemed from death and sin, a brand plucked from eternal fire? How shall I equal triumph's rays, or sing my great deliverer's praise? O how shall the goodness tell, Father, which thou to me hast showed, that I, a child of wrath and hell, I should be called a child of God? Should know, should feel my sins forgiven, blessed with this antipast, or foretaste of heaven? And shall I strike my father's love, or basely fear his gifts to own, unmindful of his favors proved? Shall I the hallowed cross to shun, refuse his righteousness to impart, by hiding it within my heart? No, though the ancient dragon rage and call forth all his host to war, though earth's self-righteous sons engage them and their God alike, I dare, Jesus the sinner's friend proclaim, Jesus the sinner's. It's interesting the way in which he goes through those first four stanzas, beginning with his own experience in the first two, describing himself as one who has been a brand plucked from the eternal fire.

Thinking properly of that passage in Zechariah, where the high priest Joshua is standing in the fire, and he is described as a brand plucked from the fire. That phrase by the way was a phrase that his mother always said to John, because when they were very young, when Charles was only four, three or four, a great fire had engulfed their home and had burned the entire to the ground, and John had nearly perished in that fire, and he had been found calling out one of the upstairs windows, and everybody else was safely out the house, and Samuel had tried to go back up the stairs, but the fire was too great, and finally someone had tried to look for a ladder, there was no ladder to be found, and two men came, one stood on the

other's shoulders, and they snatched young John out of that burning house, just at the last moment before the entire second floor gave way with a huge shudder and crashed into the center of that furnace, and his mother Susanna never forgot to remind him on a regular basis that he was a brand plucked out of the fire, and very likely Charles is thinking of that, as he says, he applies it to himself, he is a brand plucked out of the fire. He uses the phrase, very strong phrase, that he was a child of wrath and hell, but God had saved him, God had made him know his sins forgiven, he felt his sins forgiven.

We'll see this, very important for Charles, the whole area of the emotional aspect of the Christian life. And then in the last two stanzas, he goes on and says, having known the father's love, and having experienced his gifts and his favours, will he not show them forth to others, despite the cross that might imply? No, he says, even though the ancient dragon, Satan, should rage and call forth all that's host of war, he will proclaim that Jesus, the sinner's friend, Jesus. Well let me stop here, and when we come back, I want to look at some of the characteristics, there are three that I want to mention, of Charles' hymns, and then I want to focus on two in particular, both of which I've given you.

I owe for a thousand tongues to sing, which from, in all Methodist hymnals, down to the present day, is always the first hymn. But not exactly in the form that we will see, was the original. In the second hour then we want to think about some of Wesley's hymns in particular.

And I want to begin by looking at really three characteristics of his hymns. And if you study his hymns, and of the six thousand or so that he did write, specifically as hymns, it's estimated that there's somewhere between four to five hundred still in use today. That is an enormous amount.

Especially when most hymn writers, who would have written a lot less, generally have only one hymn, or a few hymns. And to have that many hymns still being sung on a regular basis by Christian congregations, says much to his merit as a hymn writer. He did write some bad hymns, there's no doubt about that.

But by and large, he was a superb hymn writer. In fact, something of a genius when it came to hymn writing. The first characteristic that one needs to note of his hymns, is that the way in which they reflect scripture.

They are deeply rooted in the word of God. Many of them drawing directly or alluding to scripture texts. Take for instance, O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.

And this is the hymn that has opened every Methodist hymnal since 1780. When Charles and John produced what they regarded as their definitive hymnal. Notice stanza 10, 12, and 13.

Just to give you a few examples. Stanza 10. He breaks the power of canceled sin.

He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me.

If you work through the scripture allusions in those four lines, you come up with the following text. The first line is an allusion to Colossians 2, verse 14. He breaks the power of canceled sin.

That's the passage where the Apostle Paul is reflecting upon the significance of the cross of Christ. Where Paul says this in Colossians 2, verse 14. Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against this, which was contrary to us.

He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. And the whole area of the cross being the place of the cancellation of the debt owed by our sins. He sets the prisoner free.

That's an allusion all the way back in the Old Testament to Isaiah 61, verse 1. There are a number of passages in the prophecy of Isaiah, in the book of Isaiah, that have what we call messianic implications. And this is the passage that Jesus himself reads when he began his public ministry in Nazareth. Isaiah 61, 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to those who are bound. He sets the prisoner free. And very clearly an allusion back to that passage there in Isaiah 61.

His blood can make the foulest clean. The scripture verse behind that is 1 John 1.7. 1 John 1.7. Where the apostle John is talking about walking in the light. As we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. He can make the foulest clean. And then finally, Galatians 2, verse 20.

Where we read the apostle Paul talking about what it means to be in Christ. And what Christ has done for the believer. Galatians 2, verse 20.

Where Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. In the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

His blood availed for me. And none of those passages there is a direct quote. But they are all allusions.

They are all rooted in those scripture texts. Or look at stanza 12. Hear him be deaf, his praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ.

Ye blind, behold your Savior come, and leap ye lame for joy. Again, behind that stand a number of biblical passages. The book of Isaiah 35.

Isaiah 35, verses 4 to 6. Where we read these words. Say to those who are fearful, hearted. Be strong, do not fear.

Behold your God will come with vengeance for the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.

The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. The lame shall leap like a deer. And the tongue of the dumb sing.

Hear him, ye deaf, his praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ. Or, and for the third line there. Matthew 11, verses 4 and 5. The line that we read.

Ye blind, behold your Savior come. Matthew 11, verses 4 and 5. Where John the Baptist has sent his disciples to ask Jesus. Is he the one whom they are expecting? Or do they wait for another? Well, Jesus says, go back and say to them.

Go and tell John the things which you see and hear. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel to preach to them. Ye blind, behold your Savior come.

And leap, ye lame, for joy. The lame going all the way back to Isaiah 35, verses 4 and 6. Or, stanza 13. Look unto him, ye nations.

Own your God, ye fallen race. Look and be saved through faith alone. Be justified by grace.

Those last two lines are a very clear allusion to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8. Ephesians 2, verse 8. Where we read that by grace you have been saved through faith. Be saved through faith alone. By grace you have been saved through faith.

And that not of yourselves is the gift of God. And a very clear allusion, then, in stanza 13 to Ephesians 2, verse 8. And you can go through all of his hymns and see how they are filled with Scripture. It's no wonder John Wesley felt that in the hymns of his brother, the Methodist people had a body of divinity.

That's what he actually calls it. A body in a small compass, a small scope or a small space. A body of experiential divinity.

Theology, a body of theology, rich in Scripture. And again, one of the things that to me is a little disturbing about current patterns of worship is when many of these older hymns are forgotten or junked or no longer sung in our congregations, it's not merely that we're passing from one style of worship to another. We're actually losing something of the richness with which our forebears worshipped.

The other thing to note, too, is that some of the older hymns emphasize portions of Scripture that modern hymns, songs, or choruses sometimes don't emphasize. I've spent a lot of time listening to modern worship or being a participant in modern worship. And one of the things that certainly is not as emphasized in modern choruses as older hymns did is the cross.

The cross is not as prominent in modern choruses. Celebration of God's goodness, His attributes, His love, etc. is very prominent, but not the cross.

And older hymns, which emphasize the cross, therefore can be still of great value to us. But the emphasis then in Wesley's hymns on Scripture. The second thing that is a characteristic of Wesley's, Charles Wesley's hymns, is that Wesley is obsessed with the great things of the Christian faith.

He's got a passion for the great things of the Christian faith. For the incarnation, for the Trinity, for the death of Christ, the cross of Christ, the resurrection, for heaven. Wesley is always coming back to these great, great truths again and again and again.

All too frequently, God's people can be taken up and their whole frame of reference and all their thinking taken up with lighter matters of the Christian life. With smaller matters. It is important that we have convictions regarding aspects of church life, church government, and the aspects of the end times, and so on.

There is a place for these. But all too frequently, I fear that we focus on these things instead of the great truths that we hold dear. The Trinity, the incarnation, the resurrection, the death of Christ, and so on.

For instance, turn over the page to Let Earth and Heaven Combine. This is a fabulous hymn. It's not often sung today.

It's on the incarnation. And you'll notice as he moves through here, he moves his reader along to heaven. And many of Wesley's hymns end in heaven.

Let Earth and Heaven Combine. Angels and men agree to praise in songs divine the incarnate deity, our God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man. A span is the measurement between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the little finger.

It's a very powerful way of describing the way in which the God of the universe, maker of heaven and earth, became man. Wesley doesn't forget that this is a mystery. Incomprehensibly made man.

He laid his glory by, he wrapped him in our clay, a mark by human eye the latent God had lay, infant of days he here became, and bore the mild Emmanuel's name. Unsearchable the love that hath the Savior brought, the grace is far above all men or angels thought. Suffice for us that God we know, our God is manifest below.

He deigns in flesh to appear, widest extremes to join, to bring our vileness near, and make us all divine, and we the life of God shall know, for God is manifest below. Made perfect first in love and sanctified by grace, we shall from earth remove and see his glorious face, and shall his love be fully showed, and man shall then be lost in God. That's a typical Wesley hymn in the way it ends.

Wesley, Charles Wesley, loves to end his hymns in heaven, and all three of them, as we will see in a minute, that I've given you, all end in heaven, end in worship and adoration, end in what we call the beatific vision, a gazing upon the face of God in Christ. But the emphasis of the hymn is the incarnation, and he richly explores it richly, the way in which the incarnation is an incomprehensible mystery, but it is the way to God, and the way to heaven. Or listen to these words, these are in the hymnal, which is in your pew, Zach, if you want to follow along, it's hymn 466, Christ the Lord is Risen Today, thinking of that event we will celebrate on Sunday to come, the resurrection of Christ.

And this is one of the great Easter hymns, Christ the Lord is Risen Today. And again, it's rich, rich in theology. One can find it in scripture, the scripture verses as well, but it's also rich in theology.

Christ the Lord is Risen Today, sons of men and angels say, Alleluia. Raise your joys and triumphs high, sing ye heavens and earth reply, Alleluia. Love's redeeming work is done, fought the fight, the battle won, lo, our son's eclipse is o'er, lo, he sets in blood no more.

Fascinating, the imagery there, of the sun going down at sunset, and the sky, if it's a clear sky at night, being suffused or charged with the redness of the sun going down at sunset. And there is the picture of the Christ, the sun. Actually, there is a passage at the end of Malachi that describes him as the son of righteousness, who was risen upon us with healing in his wings.

And the setting of the sun, the dying of the sun, he sets in blood no more. Why? Because he has been raised from the dead. Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Christ has burst the gates of hell, death in vain forbids his rise, Christ is open paradise.

Lived again our glorious King, where, O death, is now thy sting? Once he died, our soul to save, where thy victory, O grave? So be now where Christ is led, following our exalted head, made like him, like him we

rise, ours the cross, the grave, the skies. Notice how he ends, he's coming to the end of it, he's in heaven. Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, praise to thee by both be given.

Thee we greet triumphant now, hail the resurrection thou. Christ is the resurrection. It's a fabulous hymn.

It's rich, rich in biblical doctrine. And no wonder Charles Wesley, or John Wesley felt as he wrote the preface to that final definitive copy of the hymnal, that the hymnal was a means of teaching people doctrine. One of the things I feel that sometimes in our worship services we have overlooked is the way in which our hymns and what we sing, our choruses, teach doctrine.

And there are some hymns that are not too good, theologically. Just as there are choruses today, one could point out to, what are they teaching? And the richness of so many of Wesley's hymns. The third characteristic of Wesley's hymns is he not only sets forth a scripture in song, he not only emphasizes the big things of the Christian faith by means of hymns, he also always speaks of how those, the great things of the Christian faith impact upon human experience.

His hymns are orthodox, historic Christianity applied to the soul. Wesley has a great interest in the experience of the believer. For instance, And Can It Be That I Should Gain, the third hymn on the sheet that I've passed out there.

We're going to look at this in a minute in more detail. But just note here this characteristic of the great emphasis on experience. And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? Died he for me who caused his pain? For me who him to death pursued amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? And you simply have to run through a hymn like that, or a stanza like that, and ask how many times does the first person I, me, my, mine appear? How can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? Died he for me who caused his pain? For me who him to death pursued amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? My God, dying for me.

And so those are the three major characteristics of, well actually four really is what I've mentioned there. We include the emphasis on heaven that so often ends the hymns. An emphasis on bringing Scripture to verse.

Having God's people learn Scripture by the singing of hymns. The emphasis on Christian doctrine. This is one area I do feel that modern choruses fail in so many ways.

Many modern choruses are great on worship, great on selling out some of the attributes of God, but they're not as good selling out some of the great truths of the Christian faith. We have very few individuals today who seem to have a gift in writing hymns along those lines. Graham Kendrick, if you know some of Graham Kendrick's hymns, and they are hymns more than choruses, he is excellent in many, many respects.

In some ways a Wesley of the late 20th, early 21st century. But very few today seem to have this gift of being able to take Christian doctrine and put it into good verse and enable it to be sung by God's people. And then thirdly, the emphasis on experience.

Wesley doesn't want orthodoxy that doesn't touch and penetrate the heart. He wants to bring alive the fire of the heart with Christian truth and Scripture. And then fourthly, so many of his hymns end in heaven, as we will see in And Can It Be, and also O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing.

Well, let me think with you a little bit about these two hymns, O For A Thousand Tongues first, and then And Can It Be. O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing has been the initial hymn of every Methodist hymnal since 1780. We know the hymn as beginning with stanza 7. That's where we start the hymn.

O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing, my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace. Interesting that little phrase, O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing. George Whitefield, in many of his letters, said, oh, he wished he had a thousand lives to live, a thousand lives to travel this world before proclaiming his name, or a thousand voices to speak out his worth and his value.

And one senses that this was kind of an idea that was in the air. Charles Leslie here, O For A Thousand Tongues. Not a thousand tongues of individuals, but O that he had a thousand tongues.

That again touches on what we want to conclude with, the remark of J.I. Packer, that Charles Leslie is the supreme poet of love to Jesus in a revival context. Now we know the hymn as starting with stanza 7 and ending with how the hymn originally began. The hymn originally began, Glory to God and praise and love be ever, ever given by saints below and saints above the church in earth and heaven.

That's the way we end the hymn normally. That's the way Charles began the hymn. And then stanzas 2 to 6 have never appeared in a hymnal definitely after 1780.

And one of the things you need to realize about the partnership between John and Charles is that John censored or edited his brother's hymns. And John had a heart that had been warmed by Christ. No doubt about that.

His conversion on May 24, 1738. My heart was strangely warmed and I felt that I did trust in Christ and that Christ had taken away my sins. And yet John was never a man to wear his heart on his sleeve.

He was a man who had known revival and experienced the love of God being poured out in his heart by the Holy Spirit. But he never wore his heart on his sleeve. And he feared that Charles was sometimes too sentimental and too overly experiential.

And so he edited some of his brother's hymns. And he chopped out verses here and there. And he chopped out verses 2 through 6. He felt they were too experiential.

But they tell us so much about Charles and what Charles understood to be at the heart of the Christian life. On this glad day the glorious sun of righteousness arose on my benighted soul he shone and filled it with repose. Notice he's harking back to scripture text there.

The Malachi 4. That the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings. That's the passage he's thinking of. He's thinking also of his conversion.

There are some who argue that O for a thousand tongues to sing was written not long after his conversion. Maybe a year or two at most. And then stanza 3. Sudden expired the legal strife.

T'was then I ceased to grieve my second real living life. I then began to live. What he's describing here is the triumph of grace over law.

The triumph of grace over his attempts to live the life of Christ in his own strength. To fulfill the commands of Christ in his own strength. Sudden expired the legal strife.

His own striving to fulfill the laws, demands by himself came to an end. T'was then I ceased to grieve my second real living life. I then began to live.

One of the things the Methodists knew was they knew deeply the joy of Christ. And they knew, I think, and they recaptured one of the key elements of the New Testament, which is joy. And sometimes evangelical Christianity has emphasized, so emphasized the sorrow the believer should feel over his continuing sin.

Or the sorrow the believer should feel over his continuing sometimes falling into sin and his inability to please God. And yet that's not fully New Testament. The New Testament believers had a deep passionate joy that despite their failures they knew something had radically changed in their lives.

And the Methodists knew this. And then stanzas 4 and 5. Very, very personal and experiential. Notice as we're going through here and you might want to count how many times he says, I, me, O mine.

In stanzas 4 and 6. Then with my heart I first believed, believed with faith divine, power of the Holy Ghost received to call the Savior mine. I felt my Lord's atoning blood close to my soul applied. Me, me He loved, the Son of God.

For me, for me He died. I found and owned His promise true. I sustained of my part.

My pardon passed in heaven I knew when written on my heart. According to my count there's about 15 times. What does Christianity mean? All too frequently in the 18th century, I may be off by one or two, but it's neither here nor there.

The emphasis is the personal experience. All too frequently in the 18th century people felt that because they were born in a so-called Christian country and they were baptized as infants and they were part of a state church that that made them Christians. No, Wesley emphasized.

No, it did not. What Christianity was, was faith in Christ. Was the Spirit of God coming with power into your soul giving you that faith to believe.

Was applying the blood of Christ. You felt that personally. It wasn't something that was merely intellectual.

Now, the Wesleys were aware of the danger of a religion that was merely emotional. But what here they're trying to do is trying to counterbalance an emphasis on merely intellectual. What we might describe as cold intellectual orthodoxy.

There has to be this personal embrace of the death of Christ as for one sins. The feeling of Christ coming into one's life. Again, when people talk about Christianity the idea that one can be indwelt by the Spirit of God and not know it strikes one as very odd.

I think you read the New Testament. And the New Testament writers, it would be very odd for one to be a Christian. To be in Christ and not know the Spirit has come into your life.

The importance here is not so much on being able to date when that took place but are you in Christ now? Do you know the Spirit in you bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? Do you know something of the forgiveness of sins? And so on. Now, John, this is amazing, John felt these things were, these stanzas were far too personal and he cut them right out. Stanzas 2 to 3 through 6, God, just simply edited right out and he begins the stanza 7. Now, there's no doubt even in those stanzas I already mentioned that there's doctrinal truth being emphasized but certainly the experiences to the fore.

But let's begin with 7 and run through some of these other verses that I think speak very powerfully of what the evangelical revival meant. Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. Originally, Charles had written my dear Redeemer's praise.

John felt, hmm, dear, too personal and he wrote great instead. And so it's great that we, but Charles had originally written my dear Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace. And then the emphasis, see, Charles, what he had actually done is had a logic.

The logic was he begins after a general doxology in stanza 1, a general praise to God. The next stanzas from 2 through 6 deal with his own personal conversion. And then from personal conversion he goes out to witness.

But the way the hymn is being kind of redesigned by John, it removes some of that train of thought and you begin with the witness, the external witness. But that's not what Charles wanted to begin. Charles wanted to begin with his own conversion and then witness.

But my gracious Master, my God, persist me to proclaim to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of Thy name. He's speaking about Christ here. Again, indicating that truth of Packer's remark.

Wesley, the supreme poet of love to Jesus. Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease, to His music in the sinner's ears, to His life and health and peace. He breaks the power, and we've already been through this stanza in the scripture basis.

He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean.

His blood veiled for me. Notice what is faith in Christ? Just think about this one stanza. Faith in Christ, what does it bring? It brings freedom from guilt and condemnation, stanza one.

It brings freedom from the power of sin. It brings freedom from defilement. Sin, all too frequently, as men and women think about the life in this world, they think sin is freedom.

The violation of God's holy law expressed, say, in the Ten Commandments, or God's holiness expressed in the spoken words and life of the Lord Jesus. And they think that turning their back on that and living as they please, that that brings freedom. What it does, it brings bondage.

It brings defilement. It doesn't bring freedom. And so men and women find themselves in a situation where they need real freedom, and it's only found in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's only found through His shed blood. But what does faith in Christ bring? It brings freedom from condemnation. Probably the most amazing thing that we can say to God is Father.

The ability of being able to go into His presence with all of our sin and knowing every last I ought of it has been. It brings freedom from bondage. Suddenly now there is a power to fight sin.

We don't always win. We're not perfect. But there's a power now.

We have resources we never had before. There's a freedom from defilement. Just to veer off a little, I was reading the story of a woman.

Her account was described in a recent issue of Christianity Today. A woman who had been a prominent defender of lesbianism in the United States and actually had promoted it politically and had also been a prominent defender of abortion. And had regularly taken her stand against Christians at abortion clinics.

But had found after 10 to 12 years of plunged into this world a real sense of overwhelming defilement and filth. And how on one occasion in the early 90's she was at an abortion clinic where she was standing over against Christians and found herself starting to long for what they had. What was upsetting to her was the way they regarded her.

And it's actually sad when she recalls how many of them looked at her with hatred. But she said if only one of them had come up to her and had spoken of the love of God to her she would have melted, she said. The long story is that God began to move in her life.

She moved to Seattle hoping to find a community of affirming lesbians but instead found herself looking for God. Going through the Yellow Pages, looking for church addresses. And finally going to a church and hearing about the love of Christ.

And finding cleansing and freedom. And today works with Focus on the Family. These sorts of things, they're not just past.

But again in Brentley's day there were so many. The highwaymen and the pickpockets and the prostitutes. Prostitution was a major problem in this period.

And the men and women like the minors that George Whitfield first preached to that we mentioned two weeks ago who'd never heard the name of the Lord Jesus Christ but as a swear word. And suddenly Christ is being preached with power to these people. And they're experiencing freedom from guilt and shame and defilement.

Notice how he goes on. He speaks and listening to his voice in the life the dead received. The mournful broken hearts rejoiced.

The humble poor believed. And now notice what he does. He's spoken about his own conversion.

He's spoken about the need to go out in witness. And now he begins to challenge the singer or the hearer of the song. Hear him ye deaf.

His praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ. Ye blind behold your Savior come and leap ye lame for joy. Look unto him ye nations.

Own your God ye fallen race. Look and be saved through faith alone and be justified by grace. See all your sins on Jesus laid.

The Lamb of God was slain. His soul was once an offering made for every soul of man. That 14th stanza is a very powerful stanza.

A calling on men and women to look away from themselves and look to Christ alone. But probably my favorite hymn of Wesley's I've got a number but probably my favorite hymn is And Can It Be. And let me finish with this and then one regard about Jesus.

The Jesus-centeredness or the Christ-centeredness of Wesley as a hymn writer. And Can It Be That I Should Gain. This hymn was probably written within a year of Wesley's conversion.

It's based on Galatians 2.20 A passage we've already read about Christ giving himself for Paul. It's very personal but again it's filled with doctrine. And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood.

Died he for me who caused his pain. For me who him to death pursued. Wesley refuses to think that the death of Christ is some historic event of which only those who were there at the time Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders that mob of men and women crying out for the death of the Savior that they are the only ones responsible for his death.

No, no. It is me who is responsible. Amazing love.

How can it be that thou my God shouldst die for me. Notice the important thing that Wesley wants us to hear is amazement. He wants us to look at the cross and be amazed.

Tis mystery all. The immortal dies. One of the great things about Wesley is the way he can combine seemingly opposites in such a kind of poetic framework.

The immortal dies. Who can explore his strange design. In vain the first born Sarah tries to sound the depths of love divine.

Tis mercy all. Let earth adore. Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left his father's throne above so free, so infinite his grace. Emptied himself of all but love and bled for Adam's helpless race. Tis mercy all.

Immense and free. For oh my God it found out me. Again the personal note.

But again the amazement of it. This is love. Love that's amazing.

That's mysterious. That's immense. That's free.

And then stanza four. When I sing stanza four I tend to think of it as a condensation or a summary of what the revival in the 18th century was all about. Long my imprisoned spirit lay.

Wesley was 31 when he was converted. Fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.

I woke the dungeon flamed of light. My chains fell off. My heart was free.

I rose, went forth and followed thee. I think especially that phrase the dungeon flamed of light. The dungeon cell in which Wesley himself was imprisoned.

But the dungeon of England in the 18th century. When the spirit of God was poured out in revival it flamed of light. And men and women were set free.

To follow Christ. Not just set free to do whatever they wanted. But set free to be disciples.

And now he ends in heaven again. No condemnation now I dread. To be able to sing stanza five is again one of these amazing things.

Men and women, sinners can sing this stanza because of the cleansing blood of Christ. No condemnation now I dread. Jesus and all in him is mine.

Alive in him my living head. Enclosed in righteousness divine. Bold I approach the eternal throne.

And claim the crown. The stanza ends in heaven. But it also has a note of assurance there.

One of the great things that is a hallmark of the 18th century revival is the assurance. They knew that Jesus had died for sinners. And had been raised from the dead.

And the spirit of the living risen Christ had invaded their lives. And made them new men and women. Let me end with two notes.

One is this. That Wesley is very much the hymn writer of love to Christ. You see it there.

In that hymn. You see it also in this hymn. The final two stanzas of a hymn called Thou Hidden Source of Calm Repose.

And he brings out really what is the heart of the New Testament. Jesus my all in all thou art. My rest in toil.

My ease in pain. The healing of my broken heart. In war my peace.

In loss my gain. My smile beneath the tyrant's frown. In shame my glory and my crown.

In warmth my plentiful supply. In weakness my almighty power. In bonds my perfect liberty.

My light in Satan's darkest hour. In grief my joy unspeakable. My life in death.

My heaven in hell. Some of that is poetic license. Especially my heaven in hell.

But my life in death. In grief my joy unspeakable. In weakness my almighty power.

The other thing to note that I want to finish with is the remark that was made about Wesley in the City Road Chapel. There are two great well there are a number of great Methodist churches. The two oldest Methodist churches in the world are the New Room in Bristol the first place of worship that the Methodists built for worship outside of the Church of England.

And then the New Road the City Road Chapel in London right beside the house of John Wesley there is this chapel that was built for worship of Methodists since expanded and beautified in ways that the Wesleys did not know in the Victorian era. But in there there is a marble a plaque to Charles Wesley and says this As a Christian poet he stood on rivals and his hymns will convey instruction and consolation to the faithful in Christ Jesus as long as the English language shall be understood. And it's a very apt way to finish these two lectures thinking about Charles Wesley and his hymns.

Well let me stop here and ask it's 9.30 or so we have time for maybe 10 minutes for questions.

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