

William Cowper

by Michael Haykin

Michael Haykin's sermon on William Cowper explores his life, struggles, and significant contributions to Christian hymnody and poetry in the 18th century.

Duration: 1:35:28

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 13:7, John 21:15-17, Romans 3:24, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Faith Alone", "Blood Atonement"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the hymns of William Cooper and their message of salvation through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The key verse highlighted is from the fourth stanza of one of Cooper's hymns, emphasizing the importance of faith in experiencing the cleansing power of Christ's blood. The preacher explains that Cooper's hymns aim to shock and remind believers of what Christ has done for them. The sermon also references Zechariah 13 and John 1 to support the message of God's mysterious ways and the power of His grace.

Transcript

Our thoughts in this series, this series for the month of November, have to do with areas of Christian spirituality. We want to look at William Cooper, four of his hymns that we're going to look at, the most famous probably, There is a Fountain Filled with Blood, talking about the nature of the Christian life. Next week we want to think about Andrew Bonner, also sometimes his name is a bit of a contention as to how to pronounce it, sometimes pronounced Andrew Bonner, but it was Andrew Bonner, a Scottish Presbyterian minister whose claim to fame in some respects is his friendship with Robert Murray McShane, who died at the age of 29.

Bonner lived well into his 80s, never forgot his friends, wrote his friend's life story, which became an immediate spiritual best-seller. But we want to think about Bonner and the whole area of prayer and spirituality. And then somebody who I hope needs no introduction, at least in terms of his name, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a very well-known Victorian Baptist preacher who died in 1892.

And we want to think about something of his ministry, an awesome ministry that God gave to this man through the course of about 40 years. And then we want to focus our thoughts on his reflections upon the Lord's table. Almost alone among 19th century authors, Spurgeon maintained a richer view of the table than most of his contemporaries.

Most of his contemporaries had lost sight of something of the riches of the table. And Spurgeon was able to hold fast, I think, what is a very important truth about the table, because he was reading earlier writers like the Puritans. And then finally we want to look at a man named D.A. McGregor, who I suspect none of you have heard of.

Only those who have studied Baptist history here in Ontario would have heard of him. He was the second principal of McMaster University, when McMaster was still, well actually, sorry, Toronto Baptist College, which was part of McMaster University, when McMaster was still on Bloor Street. The building it occupied is now the Royal Conservatory of Music, right next door to the University of Toronto Varsity Arena.

And D.A. McGregor died in 1819. We want to think about something of evangelical life here in Ontario. In his day, it was a rich day for evangelicals in Ontario.

Somewhere between 17, maybe 75 percent of people living in Ontario went to an evangelical church during his day. Not that they were all necessarily converted individuals, but it certainly indicates something of the change that has taken place in Ontario in the intervening century. We want to think about something of the nature of evangelicalism in Ontario, and in particular we want to spend some time looking at McGregor's life and a hymn that he wrote, Jesus, Wondrous Saviour, which is an absolutely fabulous, fabulous hymn.

Well, tonight though, we want to think about William Cooper, and I'm stretching it a little because he died in 1800, at the beginning of the 19th century, and so his life touches the cusp of the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries, and so I'm, as I say, taking some latitude when I, the title of the series was Christian Spirituality in the 19th Century. Now just a little background for those of you who may not have been with us in the previous series, which looked at the 18th century, a little background about what was taking place in that century around Cooper and the environment in which Cooper exercised his ministry of writing hymns and poetry. The 18th century is a remarkable one.

It begins with a Britain in which the Archbishop of Canterbury is complaining that things had never been so low in a Christian country as they were in the 1730s and early 1740s. A Britain in which the aristocracy generally lived for pleasure, in which both from the prime minister at the time, Robert Walpole, and the early kings of the Hanoverian dynasty, George I and George II, one saw a lifestyle of immorality and sexual license and drunkenness, and not surprisingly, significant portions of the population of England followed suit. But by the end of the 19th century, the end of the 18th century rather, there had been radical changes take place in British society.

From a people who had little interest largely in the gospel, there had been planted throughout England large communities of God-fearing, Bible-loving people, many of them called Methodists. One thinks of the Wesleys, whom God raises up in the late 1730s and early 1740s at great personal cost and hardship, who rode throughout England with the message of the gospel that had in many pulpits been lost. As you look at the Anglican Church, the state church, in the 1720s through the 1740s, one has to admit that the gospel had been largely obscured, that many of those who filled those pulpits were men who were simply passing the time of day to secure time and money to do other pursuits rather than the care of the various flocks and shepherding of the people of God who were entrusted to their care.

In London, for instance, when William Remain, an evangelical minister, goes there in the late 1740s, early 1750s, he knew of no other evangelical minister in the Church of England in the entire city of London, the largest city in the world, a city probably close to a million people at that day. By the end of Remain's life, he

had lived a long life, by the time he came to die in the 1790s, he knew of probably two or three hundred, at least, in London alone, evangelical ministers. And so there was remarkable changes, and William Cooper's life is part and parcel of this evangelical revival, and he becomes one of the great hymn writers of that revival.

He was born in 1731. He was born amid what one writer has described as great expectations. He came from a family of wealth and position and power.

The Coopers were a great family, one of the upper gentry. They were not necessarily aristocracy, all of them, but they touched the fringe of the upper middle class and the upper class itself. The family on whose estate he was born had about 10,000 acres in the heart of Hertfordshire, one of the home counties around the city of London.

His father was a rector, the Reverend John Cooper, who was one of the chaplains to George II. His grandfather, you don't need to necessarily get all the details, just to get the larger picture of the background in which he came, his grandfather was Spencer Cooper, who had been in his day a judge, a member of parliament, and a fairly important figure in the political system of England in the mid-18th century. Spencer's brother, after whom William was named, was William Cooper, who also was known as Earl Cooper.

He was an earl and made an earl for some of his political responsibilities. And so law and politics were very much part of the lifeblood of his father's family. On his father's side, politics, many of them involved in politics and many of them involved in law.

It would not be surprising that his father expected his son to follow in the footsteps of his forebears and become a lawyer or become involved in politics. But William was also born into a very artistic family. His mother was a devotee of poetry of the day.

Her maiden name was Anne Donne, D-O-N-N-E, and some of you may know the great 17th century poet John Donne. And she was distantly related to this great poet of the 17th century. And a number of William Cooper's family were poets.

Ashley Cooper, he'll come into our story in a minute. He's an uncle. He made a name for himself as a poet.

One of Cooper's cousins, Martin Madan, M-A-D-A-N, a great evangelical preacher of the day, a man who had quite a ministry after his conversion under John Wesley, whose ministry was ruined in the 1770s when he printed a book defending polygamy. And we won't go into the reasons as to why he defended it, but he argued that polygamy was a solution to the widespread prostitution in London. He recommended that many of these women could be married off in multiple numbers to men.

And not surprisingly, the book ruined his ministry. But he was a famous poet. In fact, there is in our hymnals, there is sometimes a hymn that is sometimes ascribed to Martin Madan.

Maria Cooper, also an evangelical, another cousin of William Cooper, also was a fairly well-known hymn writer in her day. And she was well-known for her book, *Original Poems*, on various occasions. And so, Cooper is born into a family which has, on the one side, law and politics.

His father will expect him to go into law, and we'll see what comes of that. But on the other side, there is flowing through the veins of many of his family, this interest in literary subjects, poetry and so on. And it is that that will come out in William's life.

His mother and father had seven children. Only two would survive infancy, not untypical of the period we're looking at. William, and then born six years later, was John.

And within a few weeks of John's birth, his mother died. It was the first of a number of shocks to William's system that he really never overcame, in some respects. Down to his dying day, William retained very vivid memories of his mother, even though he was only six when she died.

He could say, many years later, I can truly say, not a week passes, perhaps with equal veracity, I might say, not a day in which I do not think of her, that is his mother. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. His father, who seems to have been a little unfeeling as to his son's experiences after the death of his mother, packed him off pretty quickly to a boarding school.

He's got two sons. One is only a few weeks old when the mother dies, and he has to take care of him with a wet nurse. The other son, whom he presumably doesn't really want around, is packed off to a boarding school.

And not untypical of the upper class in England at that time, and some of the upper middle class, was the system of sending sons to boarding schools at a very young age. And so William was sent to a boarding school, a place called the Old Vicarage, in which the headmaster was a man named William Pittman, who was a classical scholar. And it was here in these early years of his primary school education that a love for poetry was sown, because this man took his students through some of the classical poetry obviously being read in translation.

He emerged from his primary school with a love of poetry, and also because of the headmaster being a classical scholar, those languages, the rudiments of them had begun to be taught to him. And so he emerged with a beginning of what would become a commanding knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. It's a very different period of education.

The sciences were not primary in the educational curriculum. What was primary were languages and classical studies. And so it's not surprising he had a number of these languages.

He began to get them under his belt so to speak when he emerged from his primary school education. Now the tradition of the family was that he would be sent to Westminster School for his secondary education, that is education in his early and mid-teens. And so it was he was sent to Westminster School where there were about 350 other boys.

Typical boarding school. In those days Westminster was regarded as the finest boarding school for young men in England. Much even finer than one that we know the name probably well today, Eton.

And it was designed for those who would be in positions of importance, of power, and influence in British and English society when they had come to adulthood. But his experience there was an interesting one to say the least. Most of the teachers there were not good teachers.

When they turned up to class, their teaching, if they turned up to class, Cooper remembers many occasions when the teachers didn't come to class or if they did come, they might be drunk. But when they turned up to class, the teaching was of not a good quality. And so it was that William and a group of other students began to teach themselves.

And it was here that he developed a great interest in some of the classical poets of the ancient world, in particular Homer. And he began reading Homer in the original Greek, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Many years later, in his last probably ten years of his life, he will spend writing a translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Which will be published in the 1790s. And his lifelong love of poetry of the ancient world is sown in his experience at Westminster. Some of the other characteristics that Cooper would have later in life are also evident here.

His love of writing. Cooper's letters are an education in themselves. If you ever have an opportunity to read some of his letters, his letters would become very well known in the 19th century as an example of how to write a letter.

So that it not only informs, but educates. His interest in pests. Newton, rather Cooper, had a great dislike of the barbarity of many aspects of English society in the 18th century.

Bull baiting and bear baiting were still common practices, although dying out. Practices where one would put in a pit a bull or a bear and tie it to a stake. And then men would bet on their dogs as to which dog would be able to eventually kill the bear or the bull.

Fox hunting was a major pastime among the aristocracy. And Cooper, who grew up in this aristocratic environment, developed very early on a deep dislike for the treatment of animals by the English upper class. And he has a number of poems in which he's very critical of the way in which the English upper class were cruel to animals.

He had, in his time at Westminster School, he had a pet mouse that he smuggled into his room. He was not supposed to have pets in his room, but he smuggled it in and kept it in a drawer. Later in life he would have a pet hare, which he kept.

And he's got a poem called The Hare. So many of the characteristics that would be part of Cooper's life begin to emerge during his time at Westminster. Now by the time that he graduates in 1749, and he now has to make his way in the world, his father was convinced that he was a budding lawyer.

His father was completely, utterly mistaken. Cooper would later write of his father's intent. My father, he wrote, intended to beget a chancellor, a chancellor of the university.

He got to be a lawyer first, and then go on to become a chancellor. Instead he begat a translator of Homer. It's impossible for the effect to differ more from the intention.

He became articulated. There were four law courts in London with names like the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn. And you started in one of these, as it turns out, he started in the Middle Temple.

And he was articled as a clerk to a solicitor in London, and then he would work his way up so eventually he would be called to the bar and become a solicitor or lawyer himself. And he was a lazy lawyer. He admits this many years later.

Remember, it's important to recognize he is not a Christian during this period of time. He never used his time properly, wasted his talents, had really no interest in law. He found himself pushed by his father into a profession that did not attract his interest at all.

The real essence of his life was a group of men that he hung out with, if I can use contemporary jargon, in London, who called themselves the Nonsense Club. And these were a number of men, some of whom he would later recognize as ne'er-do-wells, men who had enough money to live a kind of rakish life, not bothering where their income came from because their parents had left them significant money or put their significant money away for them to live on. And they would meet each Thursday night where they'd drink and eat dinner together and share their literary concerns.

And this was the heart, really. This is what made Cooper tick. On the one hand, you've got him during the day plunged into the world of law, despising it.

And also, really, from his constitution, unable, as we will see, to cope with the demands a public life demanded. On the other hand, this kind of second life of his, this group of men, the Nonsense Club, also being the main focus of his interests. It's during this period of time, in the 1750s, he falls in love.

Having been raised in an all-male environment at these boarding schools, he had had little time to get acquainted with the opposite sex. And so it is that he's now suddenly out in the world and he has opportunity. He falls in love with his cousin.

And this is the daughter of the uncle I mentioned earlier, Ashley Cooper, who was a poet. And Ashley Cooper had three daughters. Harriet, who would become known as Lady Hesketh.

She would marry a man who had some title. And she would play, and I'm not going to go into it, she would play an important part in Cooper's later life. She would become his literary executor when he experiences deep bouts of depression.

And most writers will agree, times of insanity. And she would become his literary executor. She never liked his evangelicalism and actually destroyed parts of his literary heritage to prevent it being seen how evangelical a man he was.

So there was Harriet, that's the older sister. There was a younger sister. The younger sister was called Elizabeth, but it was a middle sister, Theodora, whom young William fell in love with.

She would die about 24 years after William. She died when she was 90. He would die, I haven't mentioned, in 1800.

She appears to have loved him. And both of them appear to have made plans to get married. But actually, Theodora's father refused to allow them to get married.

He gave his ostensible reason, two reasons. One is, first of all, they were cousins. And as cousins he felt they shouldn't get married, cousins in that day.

And since that day have gotten married, and I'm not sure how strong a reason this was from his point of view. More important from his point of view was he was convinced William didn't have any money. He was right.

William didn't have any money. And he observed closely that William didn't have really much skill in being a lawyer. And therefore he figured that William was never going to make a lot of money.

And his daughter had been used to significant wealth. And he didn't want his daughter marrying a man who as far as he was concerned would end up a pauper. The real reason was probably Ashley's wise realization that on both sides of the family there ran a history of mental illness.

And he was fearful that any children they had would be mentally insane. Ashley himself wrestled with deep depression. Sometimes for weeks on end.

And he'd shut himself up in his study. And when he didn't shut himself up in his study people said he was a very odd character in some of his actions. William Cooper himself at this period of time was going through a period of depression.

And Theodora also showed signs of being mentally unbalanced. Cooper though would take it very difficult. This was the second major shock to his system.

The first was the death of his mother. The second would be the frustration of his love, as it were, for Theodora. He wrote a poem in 1754.

It is important to note that even sometimes in the depths of despair that Cooper would be plunged even at times when we would describe him as insane he was still able to write powerful, powerful poetry. Here is a poem he wrote in 1754 when he was forced to part with Theodora. He called her Delia, D-E-L-I-A.

The heart of a lover is never at rest with joy overwhelmed or sorrow oppressed. When Delia is near, all is ecstasy then. And I even forget I must lose her again.

When absent, as wretched as happy before despairing I cry, I shall see her no more. Once he was parted from her he never saw her again in this world. And neither of them it would appear recovered from the shock in some respects.

She never married vowing that she had loved only William and could never love another. And she stayed true to that love for him many, many years later when he found himself in poverty and trying to live like a gentleman a man who had been raised to kind of an upper middle class home but he didn't have the resources to live that way and he was really in poverty he began to receive anonymous gifts of money he never found out who his benefactor was it turned out to be a benefactress it was none other than Theodora who regularly sent anonymous gifts of money to him until he died in 1800 she would not die until 1824. Now nothing influenced William Cooper's poetry more than his faith and thus his conversion plays a major role in all that subsequently came from his pen and we need to take some time in looking at his conversion fortunately for us Cooper has left us a fairly detailed written account of it in a document called The Memoir which thankfully was in other hands than Harriet Heskup's if she had gotten her hands on it she would have destroyed it in which he records how God brought him to a saving knowledge of himself.

The breaking of the relationship with Theodora certainly was a key aspect that God used on the road to Cooper's conversion that took place in around 1754-1755 two years later his best friend, a man named Sir

William Russell was drowned and that was another shock to his system he wrote these words on Russell's death Doomed as I am in solitude to waste the present moments and regret the past deprived of every joy I valued most my friend torn from me and my mistress lost he's thinking here about Theodora see me neglected on the world's rude coast each dear companion of my voyage lost nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brown ready tears wait only leave to flow why all that soothes a heart from anguish free all that delights the happy pause with me between 1757 and 1763 when Cooper does

experience an evangelical conversion the poetry that he's left and the writings that he's left some of the letters that date from this period indicate an increasing sense of despair an increasing sense of conviction of sin an increasing sense of his own worthlessness he sank lower and lower in spirits the last straw comes in 1763 he was to take a very important job in the House of Lords and there was a public examination that was part of the position his whole family was banking that he would be able to successfully make this examination and repay all the efforts that they had done into encouraging well, sending him initially to Westminster the prime school for secondary school in England and then providing for his training in law at the inner at the middle and then the inner temples but

Cooper was Cooper was a very shy person and the idea of having to go through a public examination in law for a number of hours drove him to despair he was convinced he couldn't pass the tests and he would utterly dismay his family he felt he only had one alternative which was suicide he purchased and he tried, as we will see killing himself in three ways he purchased a large what he thought was a sufficient quantity of lardanum which is a liquid form of opium he downed it but it didn't do the job finding himself still living he then took a knife and tried to pierce his chest with it but again he failed to kill himself that way finally he figured he'd hang himself and took his garter and hung himself up to one of the rafters in the room in which he was in he awoke to find himself still

alive his maid had discovered him the darker the belt had broken and he had collapsed to the floor by this time he was almost what we would describe as insane his family realizing the the strain he had been under the fact that he had been pushed to this length of trying to kill himself committed him to an insane asylum one gets the sense before we look at who was running that and what God did with him there we get a sense of his feeling of remorse about what he had tried to do in this poem lines written during a period of insanity as I say it's fascinating that he could write rich deep poetry in the midst of dreadful despair the second verse of this poem goes like this and he's talking about what he feels, how God feels about him damned below Judas more abhorred than he was who for a few

pence sold his holy master twice betrayed Jesus' name in other words he's convinced that the crime that he had done was far worse than Judas' and that he would be damned for it and then again this is the final this is the way the poem ends him, that is Judas the vindictive rod of angry justice sent quick and howling to the center, that is hell headlong I, fed with judgment in a fleshly tomb and buried above ground and this is poetry Cooper excelled in what we call free verse and I spent so much time going through this because you need to get a glimpse of where Cooper was and what God does for him and how Cooper there is a constitutional problem that Cooper will wrestle with all of his life and he does illustrate for us that some Christians those even after conversion wrestle sometimes

with nervous or fearful constitutions that things are not always made as it were perfect after conversion thankfully, William was put in a place where those who were insane were that was run by a Christian a man named Nathaniel Cotton who was a friend of another great hymn writer of the 18th century Philip Doddridge and Cotton began to try to care for him and share the gospel with him in the early days when

Cooper was there all he would do was walk around the ground saying this, I'm damned I'm damned, I'm damned he was convinced that his attempt to commit suicide had put him outside the pale of God's mercy one day however, Cooper found a Bible lying on a garden bench and he opened it and began to read of the raising of Lazarus from the dead he began to become hopeful and he says that he

saw so much benevolence and mercy and goodness and sympathy in Christ's dealing with Lazarus and with Lazarus' family he began to hope maybe there was hope for him it was a few weeks later he was reading the scriptures Nathaniel Cotton has got him reading the word of God he reads this verse from Romans 3 verse 25 I'm talking about Christ whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God a passage that speaks richly about how through faith in Christ and Christ as the substitution for sinners for all their sins that a man or a woman can enter into peace with God Cooper would say upon reading this immediately I received strength to believe and the four beams of the sun of

righteousness shone upon me I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made my pardon sealed in His blood and all fullness and completeness of His justification in a moment I believed and received the gospel he would say another year in Nathaniel Cotton's care basically he has a sufficient sense to realize that he needs to grow stronger mentally before he can go back out into the world as it were but he's being converted a number of years later he would write this poem and it's part of a group of poems we're going to look at in the second hour called the Old Me Hymns it's based on Revelation 21.5 Behold, I make all things new How blessed thy creature is, O God when with a single eye he views the luster of thy word the day spring from on high through all the storms that veil the skies

and frown on earthly things the sun of righteousness he eyes with healing on his wings struck by that light the human heart a barren soil no more sends the sweet smell of grace abroad where serpents lurked before the soul, a dreary province once of Satan's dark domain feels a new empire formed within and owns a heavenly reign the glorious orb and he's thinking about the sun whose golden beams the fruitful year control since first obedient to thy word he started from the goal has cheered the nations with the joys his orient rays impart but Jesus, it is thy light alone can shine upon the heart and we see here in this what some would regard as a hymn but probably is better described as a poem is description of what God had done for him he'd taken him from a position where he had been in

Satan's dark domain where he had felt that his heart was barren that serpents lurked there and God had shined upon him and now he was filled with God's grace and Jesus had shone upon his heart but four years after this between 1763 that's the place in 1763 is conversion between 1763 and 1767 he was led by God to live with a family called the Unwins and the father was a minister of the gospel an evangelical man and he received much spiritual care living in this household in 1767 though Reverend Unwin died suddenly and Cooper would decide to live on with the family the woman, her name was Mary Unwin was about 10, 12 years older than he and the son was a man named William Unwin who was a very close friend of Cooper's in 1767 the family met John Newton and would move to a place called Olney

let me say a little bit about Newton so you understand something of the quite the dramatic background the dramatic contrast rather between Newton and Cooper Cooper is and would remain all of his life a shy individual a man who wrestled with a delicate, really a delicate constitution to some degree Newton is the complete opposite a man who was a very powerful man physically a man who'd been raised in a godly home but again, whose mother died young and whose father had encouraged to go to sea when he was about 12 and he'd worked his way up through the ranks of merchant, marine ships in the navy he spent

some time on a British man of war a warship but then to be able to escape from that and spent most of his life on merchant ships he'd become a slave trader he'd been a participant in that

horrible slave trade where ships would leave ports like Bristol and Liverpool and would sail down around Spain and down the coast of Africa to West Africa, the Gold Coast where they would sell trinkets to African war chiefs to purchase slaves and then transport slaves across the Atlantic to the Caribbean or southern United States where they would sell them again for goods that they would transport back to England and Newton had been part of that in fact, he'd been caught up in a situation where he himself had been a slave he'd been gone ashore he'd been captured by a man who was running a slave plantation in Africa and for a while he was a slave himself you'd think that would cure him of the horrible job but it did not and in the late 1740s on one occasion when his ship had sold slaves in

the Caribbean and they were heading back to England they had run into a horrific storm and Newton, who'd been a godless man cried out to God that if God got them through then he'd think better of his life and God got them through and Newton started to be shocked that maybe there is a God who'd answered his prayer and he began to read the scriptures and he came to Liverpool in the late 1740s and was there became part of an evangelical congregation and used to go and hear George Whitfield preach and in time during the 1750s began to be convinced that God was calling him to pastoral ministry and so it was in the early 1760s when Newton was in his early 30s he was called to the church at a place called Olney in Buckinghamshire and he would be the minister of the church for about 17 to 18

years in Olney and it's in this context that William Cooper meets him and Newton is enjoying God's blessing in that church Olney was a town of about 3,000 people most of them lace workers men and women who worked in like little factories in their homes where they made lace, doilies and other lace products and it was very tiresome work they'd be up from morning from sunrise to sunset and for many of them as the years went on it was a crippling sort of work because it was very fine, very delicate and if you didn't have your vigor and strength as you got older it would be very difficult to maintain that occupation but it was among these sort of people that Newton had a rich, rich ministry and his church was filled probably somewhere between 800 to 1,000 on a Sunday morning would listen to

him preach he wasn't the greatest of preachers but he had a powerful grasp of what God had done for him he was a great spiritual mentor he became a spiritual guide to many in the area and so it was Cooper was introduced to him and he was perfect for Cooper Newton, the extrovert the man who had lived all his rough and ready life who'd had a radical conversion Cooper, a very delicate man a man who'd been trained to the life of a country gentleman in England but also who'd had a radical conversion and Newton for a number of years was a bomb to Cooper's soul he would take him with him on his visits pastoral visits he got Newton to lead in prayer sometimes in the service on other occasions he got Newton sometimes to take prayer meetings historically, as some commentators who have not been

Christians have looked at Cooper's life they've argued that Newton pushed him too far in fact, Newton was the cause of Cooper's insanity that's completely wrong Cooper had already had a serious breakdown long before he met before he met Newton and if anything calmed Cooper's mind it was his evangelical faith it was his link with Newton that produced the great Olney Hymns about 200 hymns or more that they published in a hymnal in 1779 in the late 1760s Newton had been writing hymns for quite a while suggested to Cooper you're a poet, why don't we collaborate on a hymnal and so it was they produced the Olney Hymns the most famous of which has to be Amazing Grace that great hymn that was based on a passage out of First Chronicles interestingly enough but we're not doing Newton so I'm going

to pass that by the hymnal was to appear in the early 1770s it did not appear until 1779 we're going to look at four of the hymns that were in it in the second hour and the reason it didn't appear in the early 1770s was because Cooper had another relapse there are three major periods of insanity in Cooper's life the first one in 1763 is the one that leads to his conversion the second one in 1773 will leave him shattered in a number of ways and then there was a third one in the late 1780s which will stay with him on and off to the end of his life in 1773 he had a dream he never told anyone what the dream was about but he said this the recollection of this dream before the recollection of this dream all consolation vanishes and as it seems to me must always vanish most scholars who studied

this period of Cooper's life and this dream in particular felt that it was a dream in which he saw himself in hell and he took it as a message from God and he was plunged again into deep, deep despair Newton helped him emerge to some degree whole from that to emerge to some degree from this second bout of deep depression and almost insanity but by the early 1780s by 1780 in fact Newton had moved away from Olney he had gone to a ministry a place called St.

Mary Woolworth in London where he would be till his death in 1807 and so Cooper was left with his family with the people who lived with him of the Unwins in Olney and he had lost probably his closest spiritual guide and so it was when a third bout of depression hit him in the 1780s there was really nobody to help him spiritually the third bout was made worse by one of his cousins a man named John Johnson recommending he not stay in Olney but he'd go and live with him in Norfolk in a place called East Durham it was a disastrous move for Cooper he left his Norfolk is a very different kind of scenery from Buckinghamshire where he was living Buckinghamshire is rolling hills beautiful fields and Cooper had gotten to know many of the fields on his walks Norfolk the area that he was living in is

known as the Fens very barren can be very dreary and dismal and not surprisingly it didn't help Cooper at all one of the greatest disappointments was as I said he had a number of hairs and he had to leave them all behind you might think that that's nothing but it was it was a deep disappointment to Cooper and so part he though would be lost he had no assurance of his salvation none at all and he wrestled with deep despair and yet there were times in that period in his last years where he had insights as it were that his thinking was wrong for instance he says this about a man who was afraid to die it's a poem 1792 "'Tis the judgment that shakes him there's the fear that prompts his wish to stay alive he has long he has incurred a long arrear that is arrear of death and he despairs to pay

pay follow Christ and all is paid his death your peace ensures think on the grave where he was laid and calm descend to yours and it's very rich very evangelical there's some scholars who say the last 12 years of his life Cooper lost all of his faith completely he was no longer an evangelical not true at all not at all true what he's lost is his assurance most of the time about his own salvation in 17 again in 1792 he could write to Newton Newton living in London and tell him of terrible soul-killing depressions and on one time he told him that he believed that the last shock that is his death will be fatal to him spiritually in other words that death when it came would find him plunged into hell the last shock came we're going to look at his hymns in the next hour the last shock came in

1800 John Johnson was with him at the end and he had stepped out of the room and stepped back in and Cooper died and he said he was amazed as he looked at the look on Cooper's face gone was the look of all torture his face bore he said an expression this is John Johnson an expression of enraptured wonder and Cooper often wrote about how God surprises his people and we trust that God surprised him at the end he never in his last years felt that he would be saved and the great surprise was that as he passed

over he found he was in glory well we want to in the next hour look at four of his hymns ones that I'm sure you know well maybe not for the titles he gave them God Moves in a Mysterious Way which is a very well known hymn there is a fountain filled with blood probably in my view his best

hymn Lovest Thou Me which is not that well known and then a hymn which he entitled I Will Praise the Lord at All Times and after we've looked at the hymns if we want to take some time for questions ok so it's just past 8.30 we'll break for let's say about ten minutes Moves in a Mysterious Way but that Newton or rather Cooper called Light Shining Out of Darkness which is based on the gospel of John John 1 verse 5 talking about Christ and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend or did not overcome it God Moves in a Mysterious Way God Moves in a Mysterious Way his wonders to perform he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill he treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will ye

fearful saints fresh courage take the clouds ye so much dread are bigger of mercy and shall break in blessings on your head judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face his purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour the buds may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain some commentators and I think of the great student of hymns, Eric Rutley or Rutley talks of this hymn as a hymn of despair but it's the exact opposite it's a hymn of assurance it's a hymn that declares, as we will see that despite the way that the world looks despite the aspects of events that come into a believer's life God is working

out his sure purpose, God is working out his sovereign purpose and God's people should take comfort and courage, God though he moves mysteriously will accomplish his purposes, and one day will make it all plain so it's not a hymn of despair in any way sense of form or in any way shape or form it's a hymn of great assurance in what God is doing he begins with a very interesting line, God moves in a mysterious way God moves, he acts he has plans, he has purposes in human life, in human society, and in history but it's in a mysterious way, it's in an unknowable way and to illustrate this Cooper shows takes an image from one of the Psalms, that God plants his footsteps in the sea, and rises upon the storm, he is at work, he is active, he's active in human lives, in human society he's active

in history he is at work in the lives of men and women but it is like walking on the water, no sign is seen not necessarily that one can trace his path accurately God is at work he is moving, but it's mysterious he begins with a very straightforward statement, God moves then he ends with this wonderful expression, his moving, his acting is mysterious and then he takes us from the imagery of God walking on the water he takes us into the imagery of the mine the cavern where God is at work like a miner, or like an architect deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill he treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will, from planting his footsteps in the sea and riding on the storm we turn to a God who is at work in the depths of the earth, like a craftsman like an artificer

but again notice the brightness even in the depths there is brightness here are the treasures that he is designing and all the time working his sovereign will now what Cooper has in mind here is God's work of redemption and I think he explains that in the third stanza, but he's not thinking of general providence so much as God's working of redemption in the lives of his people ye fearful saints and he could have been speaking to himself very well, because he wrestles with deep, deep fears much of his life and Cooper is one of those, as I said, sometimes enigmas to later Christians, especially those Christians who have a robust sense of assurance and who don't wrestle with fears but there are some of God's people who

wrestle with fears deep fears, that last with them for much of their

lives and Cooper is, I think, an illustration of God's work in such a person, ye fearful saints fresh courage take he's encouraging those who are fearful, who look at the circumstances of their lives and think that God is absent, or God has forgotten them, and he takes the imagery of clouds, the sea God walking in the sea God working hiddenly in the depths of the earth and now clouds, when we think of clouds we think of rain and storms but these clouds are not ones of judgment, they're big with mercy, and they will bring blessings on your head, God moves in a mysterious way blind unbelief to jump to the last stanza I'm going to come back to the other blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain, he's thinking there actually, notice the little footnote this is a footnote

provided by Cooper himself, John 13, verse 7 you might know that verse that's the one where Jesus has stooped to wash the disciples feet and Peter protests no Lord I don't want you to do this to me and Jesus then says if I do not wash your feet, you have no part of me and then he says, well wash me holy then, from one extreme as it were to the other, and Jesus, well those who have already been cleansed, need only their feet to be washed and then we read these verses, Jesus answers and what I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter, and so often and here Cooper is taking it as a paradigm of the Christian life, so often what God does in the lives of his children, we do not see the full significance of it at the time the life of faith often is lived in hindsight, as we look

back and see God's hand, God's moving us, but at the time, sometimes it looks like we're walking in darkness and blind on belief is sure to err if you take simply what you see and feel as a guide necessarily to what God is doing in your life you're sure to err and thus he gives in the previous two stanzas some examples of this, of not judging the Lord's work by feeble sense we must trust him for his grace often providence looks to us to be frowning it often did to Cooper no wonder that Cooper thought and meditated on this hymn that he had written in probably 1769-1770 in his later years but it's certainly true in Cooper's own case, he felt God had abandoned him for many many days, he woke up and he felt only despair and fear and felt God had abandoned him but behind the frowning

providence was God's smiling face so often we take to be God's absence and darkness, but in fact if we hold on by faith God will never abandon his people, and then again the next stanza his purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour, and he gives the example of the bud, the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

In the original version he didn't write that sweet will be the flower Newton as they collaborated together to produce a final version Newton encouraged him to change that to sweet will be the flower, but he originally said, but wait to smell the flower the bud may have a bitter taste, but wait to smell the flower and he's using two of the senses if you take the one sense, that of eating, well, you eat a bud and most buds don't taste that nice but the other sense, the smell that it'll produce, and again that we're not to live by sense, we're not to live on the basis of the way something appears big clouds frowning providence, bitter sweet buds but God has better things in store, and so he's using these various images, these emblems, to illustrate that God's work in the lives of his people

is often mysterious and I trust that that's something you've realized as Christians, as you walk with the Lord he often takes his people through periods of darkness one of the great Puritan writers Thomas Goodwin, wrote a book called The Child of Light Walking in Darkness he often takes his people through situations and circumstances when they have no idea what the Lord is doing in their lives and this hymn is

a great encouragement not to look at the external, not to look maybe at our immediate circumstances but to look deeper and realize that if we are by faith in Christ one day God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain there's great hope Cooper envisages that day, great day, when all of the confusion, all of the darkness and all of the ignorance will be dispelled in the life

of heaven, one day God will make it plain the passage that one might use to think through what Cooper is doing in this hymn is 1 Corinthians 13 verse 12 for now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face now I know in part but then I shall know just as I also am known Cooper may be taken his encouragement more to heart in some of his own struggles but constitutionally there are reasons that can be explained as to why he struggled with deep depression and at times even insanity in his later years but it's a marvelous hymn it's a hymn of assurance a hymn of encouragement and then a second hymn Lovest Thou Me this is based on and again the text Cooper gave for this is John 21 16, it was a favorite passage with evangelicals in the 18th century because they had discovered the core of the

gospel which was grace and mercy that it was not by works they were saved many of the evangelicals in the 18th century had grown up in unchurched context to use contemporary language they had not grown up in Christian homes the gospel had in many many circles in England as I already mentioned been lost and so many men and women grew up in brutal brutal context morally and so on and the great message of the 18th century revival that Wesley and Whitfield and Newton and William Romaine heralded was a message of salvation by grace alone and God mercy the sinners and the passage from John 21 was a great encouragement to many evangelicals and not surprising that Cooper took it as a hymn and it's a passage where Peter is fallen you recall how Peter is denied Christ three times and then in one of

the resurrection appearances the one that takes place on the shore of the sea of Galilee Christ recreates it's quite interesting Christ recreates the scene and he takes Peter through a time of reconciliation there is a word that is only used in two contexts to mean a bed of coals or fire it's used when Peter was outside the high priest house and he's warming his hand by the fire and the word that is used there is only used in one other major place in the scriptures, it's used in John 21 where it talks about them having a fire built and they've caught fish and they're roasting them on that fire and it's very interesting and it's almost, you can see how the scene has been set the fire and Christ comes and he takes Peter three times he asks him, do you love me? and what the three-fold

asking, and some commentators I think are right to argue it's a period of reconciliation he's taking Peter through that reconciliation and so it's a favorite verse for evangelicals Hark, my soul, it is the Lord Tis thy Savior, hear his word Jesus speaks and speaks to thee Say, poor sinner Lovest thou me?

I delivered thee when bound And when wounded, healed thy wound Sought thee wandering Set thee right, turned thy darkness into light Can a woman's tender care cease Towards the child she bear? Yes, she may forgetful be Yet will I remember thee Mine is an unchanging love Higher than the heights above Deeper than the depths beneath Free and faithful Strong as death Thou shalt see my glory soon When the work of grace is done Partner of my throne shall be Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me?

Lord, it is my chief complaint That my love is weak and faint Yet I love thee and adore Oh, for grace to love thee more It's a fabulous hymn And what Cooper does is he takes the word to Peter Jesus asks Peter three times Do you love me? And he takes it and he turns it as Christ's address to every sinner in congregations where this hymn was sung Jesus speaks and speaks to thee Say, poor sinner Lovest thou me? In the second and third stanzas he reflects upon the love of Christ that Christ's love was one that

came to unbind captives to heal those who are wounded to put on the right path those who are wandering astray, to give light to those in darkness What kind of love is this?

Well, it's love that'll never, never leave those to whom it is revealed A woman's tender care towards the child she bears. Can such a woman forget the child? Yes, she may be forgetful, and he's thinking here of the passage in one of the prophets where God talks that Though a mother forget her child, yet you are graven on my hands.

I will never forget you. Mine is an unchanging love, higher than the heights above, deeper than the depths beneath He's reflecting here on Ephesians 3 where the apostle Paul is talking about the love of Christ that the knowledge of this love might fill our hearts What kind of love is this?

Well, Paul tells us in Ephesians 3, 17 and 18 Christ, he's praying Christ, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height of that love and Paul piling upon piling different adjectives or different nouns rather to describe the dimensions of the love of Christ, so deep and wide is it and Cooper here picking it up higher than the heights above deeper than the depths beneath is this love I have for my people It is as strong as death Death, the great changer but it does not change God's love that we go through death His love will hold us His love holding us not our love holding Him His love holding us and the phrase love is as strong as death is from

the Song of Solomon Song of Solomon, chapter 8, verse 6 and then the next passage is an interesting one because he he fills up this he refrains but he gives the contrast glory is coming but first the work of grace you will be a partner of my throne picking up those passages in Revelation that speak about that Christ is reigning now and you of your faithful will reign with me and then the contrast we will be partners with Christ but now we are poor sinners the contrast Cooper does it brilliantly the contrast in the Christian life who are we in ourselves poor sinners but what awaits us is glory and partnership with Christ it is unthinkable that we who are such in ourselves should share such a future and then he changes in the last stanza where he now it's not Christ speaking it's the sinner

Lord it is my chief complaint and he begins as if he's got a grievance but it's quite clear it's not a grievance and we have three steps of love, my love is weak, one of the great I think realizations of the Christian life is this that our love is not what it should be given as we ponder and think about what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ the depth of that love for sinners our love is weak and faint really much of our days when we should be living in with just wonder and amazement of what he's done for us it can become blasé to us our love is weak and faint and yet we love thee and adore that's the way Peter answered yes Lord I love you yes we love thee and adore but oh for grace to love thee more the hunger of not wanting to be satisfied with where we're at wanting to know

more of that love and here Cooper has really caught the essence of what the Christian life is about and the Christian life is a growing in the love of Christ and there is much that the Christian must know he must know his doctrine and he must understand what it means to be a Christian in terms of the faith that has been delivered once for all to the saints but that's ultimately not the heart of it the heart of it is love for Christ and growing more and more in love with him who is the lover of our souls and then a third hymn is the one that is probably most known praise for the fountain opened is the way he calls it we know it there is a fountain filled with blood it's a fabulous hymn but it begins with a shocking image there is a fountain filled with blood as I said this is one of the

church's favorite hymns it's one of my favorite hymns but one has to think of how shocking it is to those who come in from the outside who have no idea of the images that Cooper is using in this hymn we'll see them in a minute and the idea of a fountain filled with blood is a shocking image he knew it was shocking he means it to shock us again to remind us of what Christ has done there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that blood lose all their guilty stains the dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day and thereby as vile as he washed all my sins away dear dying lamb thy precious blood shall never lose its power till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more ere since by faith I saw the stream thy flowing

wounds supply redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die then in a nobler sweeter song I'll sing thy power to save when this poor lisping stammering tongue lies silent in the grave Lord I believe thou hast prepared worthy though I be for me a blood bought free reward a golden harp for me to strung and tuned for endless years and formed by power divine to sound in God the father's ears no other name but thine the last two stanzas normally are not sung I've never seen them in a hymnal but this is how he originally wrote the hymn interesting again very important he ends in heaven he ends in with the assurance that God's people will be saved and ransomed to sin no more as I said the hymn starts with a shocking statement there is a fountain filled with blood but he's drawing it

from a number of biblical passages he's drawing it from for instance Zechariah he's got it right there at the top there Zechariah 13 verse 1 where the prophet Zechariah is predicting that there would be for Israel in the years to come a fountain Zechariah 13 verse 1 in that day a fountain shall be open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness the idea that God was going to cleanse his people in a day down the road but he's also thinking of two other passages Isaiah 1 verse 18 a great evangelical text Isaiah 1 verse 18 come now let us reason together says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool and then the other passage Isaiah 1 verse 18 Zechariah 13 verse

1 and the other passage is Revelation chapter 7 13 to 17 Revelation 7 13 to 17 talking about those who are in glory then one of the elders answered saying to me, who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from and I said to him, sir you know and he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will dwell among them they shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore the sun shall not strike them nor any heat for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters and God will wipe every tear from their eyes and

what Cooper is doing is he's drawing on these texts that mix images the idea of a fountain of water Zechariah 13 and also here a fountain of water for cleansing of sin and where is it and how is the sin cleansed well it's cleansed in the blood of the Lamb that's why he's got the imagery of a fountain filled with blood he's got the idea of a fountain for cleansing Zechariah 13 but the cleansing comes from the blood of the Lamb the other thing that's very strong here there are three things that's one that we need to note the second thing that's very strong here the key verse is probably the fourth stanza how do you enter into this experience of salvation by faith ere since by faith I saw the stream by flowing wounds supply redeeming love be my theme and shall be till I die it's by faith the

fourth stanza is crucial how does one come to know the cleansing of which Cooper speaks it is by simple simple faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ the other thing that's noteworthy and this is the third

thing is the way he uses participles in this hymn present participles and past participles or present participles that are active and past participles that are passive look for instance at believers what happens to believers notice in the third line of the first stanza sinners are plunged beneath that blood it's past it's something done to them or the third the second stanza there of I as vile as he washed all my sins away again it's past or the third stanza dear dying lamb thy precious blood shall never lose its power till all the ransomed church of God it's past and it's

passive they didn't ransom themselves the ransoming was done by another but then you look at the present participles which are things God's done dear dying lamb Cooper knows very well that Christ has died and has risen but he pictures him here still dying as it were for his people the emphasis being that blood that Christ shed is still efficacious it still affects salvation or notice in the fourth stanza ever since by faith I saw the stream by flowing wound supply redeeming love it's still redeeming it's God's love it's present and it's active it's still redeeming so you find this contrast in the hymn between what sinners are they can't help themselves they need to be redeemed and ransomed and God's work God's redeeming and the dying lamb still his blood efficacious and then one final

hymn and I noticed actually when I went through the hymnal that is here in the church there are two in the hymnal that I'm not looking at so these are not all of Cooper's most well known hymns but one final hymn and you might wonder why I've chosen this one but I think it well illustrates Cooper's understanding of the Christian life and it's a good way to finish and it's I will praise the Lord at all times it's a very different hymn in many respects from the ones we've looked at the pace of this hymn is unhurried and Cooper goes from season to season to show how Christ is present in all of life and he looks at emblems of different seasons and sees them illustrative of his Savior it's a beautiful hymn winter is a joy for me while the Savior's charms I read lowly meek from blemish free in

the snow drops pensive head spring returns and brings along life invigorating sun hark the turtle's plaintive song seems to speak his dying groans as Christ summer has a thousand charms all expressive of his worth tis his sun that lights and warms his the air that cools the earth what has autumn left to say nothing of a Savior's grace yes the beams of milder day tell me of his smiling face light appears with early dawn while the sun makes haste to rise see his bleeding beauties drawn on the blushes of the skies evening with a silent pace slowly moving in the west shows an emblem of his grace points to an eternal rest what he does is he goes through the seasons of the year and then day and night and looks at various emblems of Christ in all of life he comes in winter and he thinks of the

snow drops I don't think well there probably are snow drops here but it's very much part of English winters which tend to be a lot milder than Canadian winters and one would sometimes see in after snowfall at least in the southern part of England the snow drop peeking through and he's thinking here of the snow drop speaking of Christ spring and the sound of turtles I'm not sure how many turtles he might have heard I've never heard a turtle sound but he thinks of the turtle sound speaking of Christ dying groans summer the heat and the warmth there expresses the worth of Christ and autumn a milder climate not as hot as the summer speaks of his smiling face and then day and evening day as day rises he has this again it's a bit of a surprising image what does he think of he sees Christ's

bleeding form as it were and he's thinking of a red sky in the morning his bleeding beauty is drawn on the blushes of the sky and then evening speaks of an eternal rest one sees him taking the Christians through the various seasons of the year and then night and day and showing us that Christ is evident all through creation that we are to praise the Lord at all times and as I hope I showed in the first hour he knew that

eternal rest at the end of his life it's one that comes through a number of times in his hymns this longing for heaven and one trusts that as John Johnson looked upon his face on those as he had passed from death as he had gone through death he saw a look of surprise upon his face and no longer the torture that had been part of his face but let me stop here and ask if

there might be some questions there's a lot more I mean Cooper wrote 67 hymns but these are some of the most famous of his hymns he was successful as a poet but it didn't appear to reward him a lot of royalties in the 1780s he struggled with being in poverty and he was helped by a number of people Joseph Hill a man who was a friend of his and then Theodora Cooper who sent him anonymous gifts he tried to live as a gentleman he was known in Olney for instance as Squire Cooper but he really didn't have the resources financially to maintain the lifestyle to which he had been accustomed he became famous through he published two books of poetry while he was at Olney and they made him fairly famous but it didn't seem to recoup an enormous amount of finances from him yeah and it grows out of it

grows out of his love of nature and he spent an enormous amount of time walking his typical day he describes in one letter of his typical day would be to get up around 8 or 9 o'clock and have a time of prayer and then go for a morning walk for maybe an hour or two and then have lunch write some poetry and then go for an afternoon walk and then come back and write a bit more poetry maybe go to a prayer meeting or go Newton on one of his pastoral visits and then come back and retire for the night it was very much a he he had a lot of opportunity to observe the outdoors he didn't work the way many of his contemporaries did and he tried in many respects he tried to live the life of a country gentleman yeah I certainly would never want to say that contemporary music is all to be trashed and

not to be some of it to recognize some of it as of value it saddens me to see congregations not using these older richer hymns Cooper had things to tell us that we're not thinking about today a lot of hymns today fail to recognize I think or a lot of choruses say that the Christian life is not a bed of roses always that there are struggles and some of the wrestling I think you see in Cooper's yeah I don't know if I've read all of it I did look at it probably it would be about 25 years ago I looked at some of it yeah the story of sorry in the account of Lazarus Christ knows Lazarus is dying and he stays where he is at some geographical distance away and he could have gone before but he stays there and then he tells the disciples Lazarus has died and one wonders why he does that and it is

to illustrate this theme that first of all he is the resurrection and that when his people are as it were in the depths of despair he can give life and bring life out of that context and it certainly was that way for Cooper the story of Lazarus gave him hope that if Christ could do this for this dead man he could certainly do it for him who was spiritually dead and resting in the depths of despair well it certainly does speak to us of the power of Christ to raise the dead and physically dead I am the resurrection of life but also those who are spiritually dead from reading his life he does wrestle with one theme which is fear and in recent months I've come to see that fear can be as bad a sin as any sin that we can talk about because it is lack of trust in God and yet for some I think it

is his constitution his death of his mother at an early age and then his being put when he was six years old into a boarding school situation and it was a typical British boarding school back in those days, those elements of brutality one writer and I'm not sure there's no evidence of this he argues that there may have been sexual abuse when he was young by some of the older boys I've not seen the text he cited didn't say that explicitly but he got all of that he finds himself shoved by his father into a career he doesn't want to be in he doesn't have the wherewithal to be a lawyer and especially not in the context of the House of Lords

where there was a lot of public elements to it then the breaking of the relationship with Theodora and these things push him over the edge and although

God uses those to bring him to conversion the healing is not one in which all of his fears suddenly disappear he wrestles with those fears and he is a in one of his poems he talks about he is a stricken deer whom the archer aspired upon and he went to hide and die in a thicket and the Lord came by and healed him physically but he still remained that stricken deer to some degree even after his conversion and I think as Christians and some might disagree with this that while there is from one perspective this enormous change that takes place in a person when they become a Christian on the other hand conversion doesn't erase our temperaments and some people are temperamentally more prone to fear and anxiety and despair and melancholy than others and Cooper was such a man and so yes he did

wrestle with this as a besetting sin

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